MODERN POETS AND CHRISTIAN TEACHING

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MODERN POETS
AND
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RICHARD WATSON GILDER
EDWIN MARKHAM
EDWARD ROWLAND SILL

BY
DAVID G. DOWNEY

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TO

RICHARD WATSON GILDER

TO

EDWIN MARKHAM

AND TO THE MEMORY OF

EDWARD ROWLAND SILL

WHOSE WRITINGS HAVE BEEN AN INSPIRATION
TO ME IN MY PERSONAL LIFE AND IN MY
MINISTRY AS A PREACHER OF THE
GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST,
THIS BOOK IS AFFEC-
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Friends, beware!
A keen, new sound is in the air,—
Know ye a poet's coming is the old world's
judgment day!

—*Richard Watson Gilder.*

FOREWORD

THE POET AND THE PREACHER

THE poet and the preacher have much in common. They deal, in many instances, with the same subject-matter. "My stress lay on the incidents in the development of a Soul; little else is worthy of thought." So said Browning. And what else is it that the preacher should busy himself with? Not only is the material to be handled and molded common to both, but also the spirit that makes for fit handling, for right development, is found alike in poets and preachers of the highest order. Every poet is a dreamer, a seer, a visionist. So also is the preacher; indeed, in proportion as he has the power to dream dreams and to see visions is he the preacher of power and inspiration. What marvelous preaching there was on Pentecost—not only by Peter but by those associated with him. And the explanation is given: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." When Arthur O'Shaughnessy says:

> We are the music makers,
> And we are the dreamers of dreams,

Wandering by lone sea breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;

World losers and world forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams;
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world forever, it seems.

. . . . . .

One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And three with a new song's measure
Can trample a kingdom down,

he is depicting the true preacher as well as the genuine poet.

This power of vision, common alike to poet and preacher, is simply the ability to perceive the ideal. And the ideal, again, is life at its richest and best. The business of the preacher is to call out and develop this highest and best possibility. He must be able to see it in the last and lowest man. The touch of vision must be upon him, so that with Emerson he will know that

'Tis not in the high stars alone,
Nor in the cups of budding flowers,
Nor in the redbreast's mellow tone,
Nor in the bow that smiles in showers,
But in the mud and scum of things
There alway, alway something sings.

It is not difficult to see that this ability or faculty is the distinguishing mark of the mighty preachers. David is surely a preacher of God's

righteousness, providential care, and Fatherly comfort. And he is all this, and all this so deeply and genuinely, so feelingly and universally, because he has the gift of inner spiritual vision. The best things in Isaiah are those parts of his message that glow and burn with the swift vision and the incisive touch of the dreamer and seer. Jesus is the supreme visionist; no one without this power could have weighed and balanced the immaterial and material worlds in his thought, and expressed the result in a sentence that has stood the test of two thousand years, and will stand till the end of time: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" That is the eternal and eternally true comparison. And it is so because it is not the result of logic, but the swift and sure deduction of a vision that penetrates to the depths, and interprets with infallible certainty the very heart and life of things. Paul is mighty as a debater, and as a forceful preacher of doctrine; but will anyone deny that the finest utterances of Paul arefound in those passages that glow and burn with the vision and insight of the poet? "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Nothing that Paul ever wrote has more of eternal truth and abidingness

than this, that Dean Stanley calls "a hymn in praise of Divine Love."

Who will say that there is not as much vigorous and vital theology in the hymns of Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts, and Ray Palmer as in the sermons of John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, and Phillips Brooks? It is not alone the logician who convinces and wins; often the singer and the seer, who outlines, and suggests, and reveals, is quite as powerful an influence. The true poet, then, when he touches the great questions of life, becomes unconsciously a theologian. Some of the best theology—the most truly biblical, I mean—is found imbedded, as gold or diamonds in precious soil, in the stanzas of the poets. Professor Winchester says: "Such a work as the In Memoriam, a hundred years hence, will be accounted a truer picture of the vital thought at the middle of the nineteenth century than all our formal philosophies and theologies put together." And Professor Olin A. Curtis, in his book of theology, The Christian Faith, tells us that "in the poetry of Robert Browning one can come closer to the whole reality of human life than he can in any scientific treatise published in the last hundred years." The poets of whom we are thinking speak because they have a message; like as in the prophet of old, it is a fire in the bones that must burst into flame. And just here

is the poet's value to the preacher; dealing with the same subject-matter, imbued with the same interpreting spirit or quality, controlled with the same high sense of duty and mission that ought to control every preacher, he utters his message in forms of abiding beauty and power, puts his bugle to his lips and scatters "a divine contagion on mankind."

This little volume is an attempt to interpret some of the poets of our day; to show how their thoughts, consciously or unconsciously, have been molded and influenced by the great body of Christian truth that has filtered through the ages; to make clear what may be the special message of these poets to our own time; to estimate the spiritual value of this message, and to illustrate all this by appropriate selections from their published poems.

RICHARD WATSON GILDER

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. —*Jesus.*

Keep pure thy soul!
Then shalt thou take the whole
Of delight;
Then, without a pang,
Thine shall be all of beauty whereof the poet sang—
The perfume, and the pageant, the melody, the mirth
Of the golden day and the starry night;
Of heaven, and of earth.
Oh, keep pure thy soul!—*Gilder.*

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

ANYONE fairly familiar with Methodist history and literature would naturally surmise that a boy baptized into the name of the author of Watson's Institutes must have had a strong and sturdy Methodist ancestry. In the case of Richard Watson Gilder this surmise would be found correct. His paternal grandfather, John Gilder, was a member of the State Legislature and of the Board of Councilmen of Philadelphia in the days when membership in such a board indicated integrity, mental and moral. This John Gilder was a man of independent thought and progressive spirit, as may be judged from the fact that the records show him as advocating and pushing to a successful issue the proposition to introduce illuminating gas into the homes of Philadelphia; this, too, in spite of a very strenuous opposition, based, among other objections, on the argument that such introduction would be extremely hazardous, and would seriously endanger the lives and properties of the citizens. That he was a man held in high repute by his fellow citizens is evident from the fact that he was president of the Board of Builders of Girard College, and laid the corner stone of that highly distinguished institution. Also he was a gen-

uinely religious man, a class leader in the Methodist Church in the days when men of probity and clear brain, occupying this position, did so much to strengthen and develop the intellectual and spiritual life of the Methodist type of Christianity.

Philadelphia, in the time of which we write, was one of the strongholds—numerically, financially, and spiritually—of American Methodism; a glory that has not yet wholly departed. It is not surprising that with such a parentage and such an environment two sons of John Gilder, John L. and William Henry, should have joined the ranks of the itinerant Methodist ministry. The latter of these, William H. Gilder, married Jane Nutt; and of this union there was born, at Bordentown, New Jersey, February 8, 1844, the subject of our sketch, Richard Watson Gilder. The father of Richard Watson was a man of excellent literary taste and of fine scholarship. He was at one time editor of the Philadelphia Repository, and also of the Literary Register, and was later interested in The Methodist, and became its regular correspondent from the seat of war. While Richard was still a child his father established and was president of the Female Seminary at Flushing, New York. Afterward he entered the army, went to the front as chaplain of the Fortieth New York

Volunteers, and died in the heroic performance of duty, as he conceived it, ministering to the soldiers stricken with smallpox.

Our author received his education almost entirely in the little seminary at Flushing and later from private tutors. His vocation was early indicated. At the age of twelve he is publishing a little foot-square paper, for which he himself sets the type and does all the work. A little later he, with some youthful companions, is publishing a campaign paper at Bordentown, New Jersey. At the death of his father young Gilder is thrown upon his own resources, and after one or two tentative attempts we find him finally settled into his life's work, first as reporter on the Newark Advertiser, and then successively legislative correspondent, local editor, and managing editor. A little later, in conjunction with Mr. R. Newton Crane, he started the Newark Morning Register, a daily publication; and about the same time he assumed the editorship of Hours at Home, a New York monthly, published by the Scribners, for which he had previously written editorials.

The newspaper venture was not a success financially, and finally had to be given up. When Scribner's Monthly was started, Hours at Home was incorporated with it, and Dr. Holland, editor-in-chief of the new publication, associated Mr.

Gilder with himself as managing editor. During the eleven years of Mr. Gilder's association with Dr. Holland the magazine was greatly enlarged, and when, in 1881, the doctor died it was natural and inevitable that his successor should be his former brilliant and indefatigable managing editor. Thus we see that at the age of twenty-six Richard Watson Gilder, as has well been said, "found himself in a position of honor and high literary influence," and at thirty-six —the name meanwhile having been changed from Scribner's to The Century—he is editor-in-chief of one of the leading literary magazines of the country.

The poetic instinct is native to Mr. Gilder. It is as natural for him to express himself in poetry as for other men to speak or write in prose. During his busy editorial career he has also been writing verse destined to live and have abiding influence. His publications are gathered in the following volumes: Five Books of Song, 1894, in which are included The New Day, The Celestial Passion, Lyrics, Two Worlds, and The Great Remembrance. To these must be added In Palestine, Poems and Inscriptions, and his recently published volume, In the Heights. All bear the imprint of The Century Company.

In addition to all this Mr. Gilder is a frequent

presence at distinguished literary, social, and civic events. To college and university occasions he contributes by voice and pen; and though he will not allow himself to be called "Doctor," he has received honorary degrees from Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Dickinson, and Wesleyan. It would be tedious, as it is needless, to specify the literary, artistic, and social clubs, associations, and other organizations that have been honored by his membership and helped by his wise and effective counsel and leadership.

This sketch may fitly close with the statement that he was the first president of the Kindergarten Association of New York, and had a large share in the establishment of free kindergartens in New York city. Also, he was chairman of the Tenement House Commission, New York, 1894, and gave to it many months of painstaking and discriminating thought and service. Much of the improved condition in New York city tenements is due to Mr. Gilder's unselfish labor.

In 1874 Mr. Gilder married Miss Helena DeKay, daughter of Commodore DeKay, and granddaughter of Joseph Rodman Drake. He has a city home in the neighborhood of Washington Square, New York, of which neighborhood he says:

> This is the end of the town that I love the best.
> Oh, lovely the hour of light from the burning west—

Of light that lingers and fades in the shadowy square
Where the solemn fountain lifts a shaft in the air
To catch the skyey colors, and fling them down
In a wildwood torrent that drowns the noise of the town.

Also a country residence in Tyringham, among the Berkshire Hills; and of this latter he sings:

Down in the meadow and up on the height
The breezes are blowing the willows white.
In the elms and maples the robins call,
And the great black crow sails over all
In Tyringham, Tyringham Valley.

The river winds through the trees and the brake
And the meadow grass like a shining snake;
And low in the summer and loud in the spring
The rapids and reaches murmur and sing
In Tyringham, Tyringham Valley.

THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE

THE MAN

To understand and rightly estimate our author we need something more than the biographical data. What are some of his intellectual and moral inheritances; what was the nature of his early environment; and what the character of that personality which inevitably molds and controls heredity and environment to one's own ends and aims? From his paternal grandfather, John Gilder, it is easy to see that Richard Watson inherits his practical interest in men and affairs. He cannot be content merely to write and advise; to utter beautiful sentiments, and leave the practical application of these sentiments to others. He is himself a tireless toiler in ways that make for social and civic betterment. What has already been noted in our biographical sketch, concerning his interest in kindergarten development and tenement house reform, is proof enough of his practical sympathy and effort for the life of to-day. From his father comes not only spiritual sensitiveness and literary instinct, but also a high moral enthusiasm that keeps him toiling at tasks that can hardly be naturally agreeable to one of his temperament;

because, like Paul, he feels he is debtor to all men. Unconsciously he realizes that the gifts and graces, the abilities and capacities of life are not for selfish ease and personal enjoyment, but for useful service. And this truth of the nobility of service he not only urges and glorifies in his poems, but exemplifies in his life. Dr. William V. Kelley speaks simple truth when he says, "Life, its tasks, duties, and responsibilities, are immensely sacred to Richard Watson Gilder." I fancy he would heartily subscribe to the truth of Fanny Kemble's lines:

> A sacred burden is this life ye bear;
> Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly,
> Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly.
> Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
> But onward upward, till the goal ye win.

His mother was a woman of quiet and beautiful life, with a poetic nature, and a mind much given to beautiful dreams and exquisite ideals that have come into concrete form in the life and work of her boy. From her comes, doubtless, the delicate and dreamy, the sensitive and responsive poetic tendency. Her influence is not doubtful, for he himself has told us how enduring it is. In one of his poems he speaks of the depression that comes as one sees the world rewarding vice and punishing innocence; man clinging to his low, brutish nature; nature itself careless or cruel; but his mother's

face glows in vision and he takes heart of grace and sings:

> These are forever with me,—but grow dim
> When I remember my sweet mother's face.
> Somewhere, at heart of all, the right must reign,
> If in the garden of the infinite
> Such loveliness be brought to perfect bloom.

And can anything be more exquisitely filial and tender than these lines from Poems and Inscriptions?—

> Many the names, the souls, the faces dear
> That I have longed to frame in verse sincere;
> But one high name, sweet soul, and face of love
> Seemed ever my poor art, oh, far above.
> Like Mary's, stricken with sorrow was that face;
> Like hers it wore a most majestic grace.
> That soul was tender as the sunset sky,
> And full of lofty dream her days went by;
> That name—than God's alone there is no other
> Holy as thine to me, O sacred Mother!

Fortunate as Mr. Gilder is in his heredity, he is equally so in the matter of early environment, and in the quality of the influences that touched him in the plastic years of early boyhood. Among his father's intimate friends were the Rev. Drs. John McClintock, George R. Crooks, and James Strong. If there ever was an aristocracy of Methodism—an aristocracy sprung from the union of culture and spirituality—these men were surely among its chosen representatives. Moncure D. Conway, who cannot be accused of any bias

toward the Methodism he has left and disparaged, knew some of these men. When he entered Dickinson College he found them in the faculty, and in his recently published Autobiography[1] says of them: "The classical department was represented by Dr. John McClintock and Dr. George R. Crooks, who were Broad Church Methodists and original thinkers." Of Professor McClintock he says: "His scholarship and literary accomplishments brought his pen into much demand for the Methodist Quarterly and other publications. He kept abreast of theological and philosophical inquiries in Europe and America. We were all proud of his reputation." After hearing a sermon from Professor Crooks, based on 1 Cor. 13, he writes: "Whether then, or before, or afterward, a great love for Crooks sprang in my breast. I presently had him for my 'patron,' and I never knew a better man. Our friendship continued through life, and his death bereaved me of one from whose affection no doctrinal differences could ever alienate me." Conway did not know Dr. Strong, but those of us who did know him know well how worthy a member he was of that unique and high-souled group—McClintock, Crooks, Strong, and Gilder. Writing in the Christian Advocate of August 30, 1894, shortly after

[1] Vol. 1, pp. 47, 50, 54.

Dr. Strong's death, Mr. Gilder pays tribute to his worth and to the abiding influence of his words and works. "May I claim a little space here," he says, "for a brief personal tribute to my dear and lifelong friend—Dr. James Strong? There are very many who have had with him the relation of pupil to master, but I think there must be few who so early in life came in such close contact with the doctor. . . . It was for a little class of students that met in his study on Bridge Street (Flushing) that he made his Greek and Hebrew grammars. That class consisted of several clergymen and teachers, and one very small boy whose teacher helped generously his strenuous efforts to keep up in the scholarly procession of his elders. . . . How kind and helpful he was may well be imagined; but outside of this (in his official capacity as Sunday school teacher and class leader, and in his personal relations as friend and spiritual guide), how gentle and wise he was with a boy who took too seriously, no doubt, the conventional rules and precepts of religion. All this cannot be fully told without going too deeply into matters of personal concern. The nobility of his nature, his brightness of spirit, and wisdom in dealing with perplexities and burdens of mind and soul —how invaluable such an influence (added to similar influences on the part of the beloved parents)

in training the spirit and driving mordidness from the mind of a child in whose nature æsthetic instincts and traditional pietistic teachings were making dangerous warfare." One can readily see how much the intellectual strength, the spiritual sanity, and the sanctified common sense of James Strong had to do with the early making of Richard Watson Gilder.

But we can never safely neglect the personal equation. Shy and reticent, inclined, as we see by the extract just given, to somewhat too serious and, probably, morbidly conscientious a view of religion, none the less this sensitive and timid boy had his own ideas and ideals. That intangible but most real and powerful something that we name the "Ego" was at work upon heredity and environment, molding and fusing them at its own behest. The son of a preacher, this man is not a preacher in the technical sense or after the accepted order. The companion and friend of theologians, and of scholars in special and abstruse departments of thought, he is neither a linguistic professor nor the framer or defender of theological creeds. But even as these men, his companions, friends, intellectual and spiritual guides, had their message for their day, and uttered it with freedom and with force, so he has his message, and in the same spirit that animated them he

utters it freely and sends it out fearlessly. That he feels this, and realizes not only the privileges but the duty of self-expression, is evident from what he says in "Art and Life":

> Said the Seer to the Poet: Arise
> And give to the seas and the skies
> The message that in thee burns.
> Thrice speak, though the blue sky turns
> Deaf ears, and the ocean spurns
> Thy call. Though men despise
> The word that from out thy heart
> Flameth, do thou thy part.
> . . . . .
> In the home of thy spirit be true,
> Though the voice of the street cry shame.

Not only does he feel himself possessed of a message that must be uttered, obligated with a mission that must be performed; but also he knows the meaning of message and mission. This he interprets and sets clearly forth in "The Poet and His Master." The Poet is complaining to his Master that he cannot sing because of the woes of his dearest friend. His heart is heavy and his lyre is unstrung. Then the Master speaks:

> "Alas, and hast thou then so soon forgot
> The bond that with thy gift of song did go—
> Severe as fate, fixed and unchangeable?
> Even though his heart be sounding its own knell
> Dost thou not know this is the poet's lot:
> 'Mid sounds of war, in halcyon times of peace,
> To strike the ringing wire and not to cease;
> In hours of general happiness to swell

The common joy; and when the people cry
With piteous voice loud to the pitiless sky,
'Tis his to frame the universal prayer
And breathe the balm of song upon the accursèd
air?"

He strikes even a deeper note than this. It is not enough for the poet to feel that he has a message that must be delivered, a mission that may not be shirked; not enough even rightly to interpret the scope of that message and mission. He needs also to know and touch the source of abiding inspiration, knowledge, and truth. Whence shall he gain the wisdom and skill and strength for the duty and work that must be done? That our poet knows the home of wisdom, the secret place of truth, and the dwelling place of strength is evident when one gets at the truth enshrined in "The Master Poets":

He the great World-Musician, at whose stroke
The stars of morning into music broke;
He from whose Being Infinite are caught
All harmonies of light, and sound, and thought—
Once in each age, to keep the world in tune
He strikes a note sublime. Nor late, nor soon,
A godlike soul—music and passion's birth—
Vibrates across the discord of the earth
And sets the world aright.
Oh, these are they
Who on men's hearts with mightiest power can
play—
The master-poets of humanity,
From heaven sent down to lift men to the sky.

THE MESSAGE

The message of Gilder's poetry to our day cannot be compassed in a single sentence. His is a comprehensive muse that deals with many subjects. A harp he has of many strings sending out notes and harmonies of many sorts. Wordsworth speaks of

> that blessed mood,
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,
> Is lightened: . . .
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things.

This mood is Gilder's. He sees into and interprets the life of things. Our age is surely engrossed in the material, absorbed in business and pleasure. What Emerson said of his day is equally true of our time:

> The horseman serves the horse,
> The neatherd serves the neat,
> The merchant serves the purse,
> The eater serves his meat;
> 'Tis the day of the chattel,
> Web to weave and corn to grind;
> Things are in the saddle,
> And ride mankind.

It is to such an age that Gilder's verse is directed. To men and women occupied with the

material, he sings of the value of the spiritual. To a day all too easily satisfied with surfaces, he speaks of substance and reality. To a time that, as one of the ancients said,

> Does not abolish the gods,
> But sends them well out of the way;
> With the rarest of nectar to drink,
> And the blue halls of nothing to sway,

he offers a God present and active, immanent and interested in all the avenues of man's manifold activity:

> Heardst thou these wanderers reasoning of a time
> When men more near the Eternal One shall climb?
> How like the newborn child, who cannot tell
> A mother's arm that wraps it warm and well!
> Leaves of His rose; drops in His sea that flow—
> Are they, alas, so blind they may not know
> Here, in this breathing world of joy and fear,
> They can no nearer get to God than here.

In this he is at one with the psalmist, whose soul is satisfied with nothing less than the living God; and with Tennyson, who sings:

> Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet—
> Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

He is the poet of the deeper, truer, and higher life of man. In his emphasis and unfoldment of that life there are many notes.

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One note of his message is surely concerning the cleanness of life. Whether he deals with nature, or human nature, he believes what is written: "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." He believes, again, that the things of God are not to be called, or made, common or unclean by any narrow or meager thought of man. His own nature is so healthy and clean that it fits him to be the interpreter of God's thought in the creation of nature and humanity.

> Thy mind is like a crystal brook
> Wherein clean creatures live at ease,
> In sun-bright waves or shady nook.
> Birds sing above it,
> The warm-breathed cattle love it,
> It doth sweet childhood please,

may well stand as the motto and symbol of his thought and writing. That men may degenerate, that the high purpose of creation may be frustrated, that the clean things of God may become unclean in the handling of low-thoughted men, he sees as well as anyone. But his effort always is to show the bright and beautiful, the high and holy purpose of the whole sweep of life. His Prelude in "The Celestial Passion" is a plea for purity, white as snow upon the untrodden Alpine peaks; flawless as the unstained nature of the angelic host.

Its genesis was as follows: One evening in a somewhat general company he had been forced to hear the gossip of suspicion and of acrid criticism. As he walked homeward, though he had taken no part in the slantwise and gossipy talk, his sensitive nature felt humiliated; unconsciously his moral nature had been soiled; he felt as the traveler who, through no fault of his own, has been begrimed with the soil and stain of the journey, and must have a bath before he can feel comfortable and clean. So his inner spirit felt, and the Prelude is the expression of that feeling:

O white and midnight sky! O starry bath!
  Wash me in thy pure, heavenly, crystal flood;
Cleanse me, ye stars, from earthly soil and scath;
  Let not one taint remain in spirit or blood!
Receive my soul, ye burning, awful deeps;
  Touch and baptize me with the mighty power
That in ye thrills, while the dark planet sleeps;
  Make me all yours for one blest, secret hour!
O glittering host! O high angelic choir!
  Silence each tone that with thy music jars;
Fill me even as an urn with thy white fire
  Till all I am is kindred to the stars!
Make me thy child, thou infinite, holy night—
So shall my days be full of heavenly light!

Another note in this poet's message is the high seriousness of life. The ethical character of even life's little things is evident to this interpreter of man's deeper nature. How well and clearly is

this portrayed in the lines entitled "One Deed May Mar a Life":

> One deed may mar a life,
> And one can make it;
> Hold firm thy will for strife,
> Lest a quick blow break it!
> Even now from far on viewless wing
> Hither speeds the nameless thing
> Shall put thy spirit to the test.
> Haply, or e'er yon sinking sun
> Shall drop behind the purple West
> All shall be lost—or won!

And what is more indicative of this ethical sense, this sanely religious view of life, than such simple and perfect lines as these?—

> Each moment holy is, for out from God
> Each moment flashes forth a human soul.
> Holy each moment is, for back to him
> Some wandering soul each moment home returns.

The religiousness that Mr. Gilder believes in is not the sort that expresses itself in formal fashion or with stereotyped phrase. It does not content itself with easily and glibly repeating the religious concepts of other days and other men. Rather it is fealty to truth, loyalty to right and righteousness, and, back of all that, loyalty to the God of truth and right and righteousness. In these days, when so many men seem to have lost moral sensitiveness; when conscience and the

sense of right seem, if not dead, then surely dull and blunted; when men high in the world of civics and commerce stand convicted of low ideals, base, selfish, and ignoble aims, willing to sacrifice sacred trusts for the gaining of pelf and power and place, how heartening and strengthening it is to hear our author say:

> He fails who climbs to power and place
> Up the pathway of disgrace.
> He fails not who makes truth his cause,
> Nor bends to win the crowd's applause.
> He fails not, he who stakes his all
> Upon the right, and dares to fall;—
> What though the living bless or blame,
> For him the long success of fame.

The bugle here gives no uncertain sound. Whenever he deals with human life, either in the abstract or in relations, his touch is swift and sure. The ethical concept is never absent. Life is the all-important fact; all else is secondary. Well does he say, "Thou who hast wisdom, fear not Death, but Life!" Man is no trifler to spend his time with the toys and passing pleasures of the moment. Nor is he to spend his years in repining and moping because of life's pains and privations, its adversities and oppositions. Rather he is to rejoice in the high privilege of loyalty to truth and duty—the royal opportunity of the ordinary hour and day:

Give thy day to Duty!
To that high thought be given
Thine every hour.
So shall the bending heaven,—
As from the root the flower,—
Bring to thy glad soul Beauty.
—*In the Heights.*

Another note in the poet's message is the nobility and dignity of service. Some men toil and agonize in the effort to possess that they may be free from the pressure of obligation. Said a man of large wealth, "The habit of my life has been to acquire; you do not know how hard it is for me to give." Mr. Gilder understands that the true law of life is that the more we have the more we owe. Possession, capacity, gifts, or powers in any sphere are a sacred and holy trust. We have been put in possession of these things not to hoard, but to use, and to enjoy in the using; "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." In "The Poet and His Master," already referred to, he clearly shows that the business of the poet is not merely to sing when his own soul is full of peace and joy, but even in time of disappointment and bitter agony; then also he must utter his song, for his work is to comfort and strengthen and cheer his fellow sufferers. When the Poet would cease because of his personal grief, because of the misinterpretations and

malignments of the ignorant or wicked, then the Master says:

I bid thee sing, even though I have not told
All the deep flood of anguish shall be rolled
Across thy breast. Nor, Poet, shalt thou bring
From out those depths thy grief! Tell to the wind
Thy private woes, but not to human ear,
Save in the shape of comfort for thy kind.
But never hush thy song, dare not to cease
While life is thine. Haply, 'mid those who hear,
Thy music to one soul shall murmur peace,
Though for thyself it hath no power to cheer.

Then shall thy still unbroken spirit grow
Strong in its silent suffering and more wise;
And as the drenched and thunder-shaken skies
Pass into golden sunset—thou shalt know
An end of calm, when evening breezes blow;
And looking on thy life with vision fine
Shalt see the shadow of a hand divine.

The poet has no right to inflict his personal woes and losses upon the world. The pessimism that would weaken and dishearten the many because of individual grievance has no place in literature. With Emerson he holds that the individual is not to depress and dishearten others with his tale of woe. He is to "consume his own smoke," and by the right understanding of all life's happenings he is to be the inbringer of light, and comfort, and strength. A significant, and at the same time a pathetic, illustration of the high, incalculable value of service is set forth in his poem "Pro

Patria," which is not only an illustration of this part of our poet's message, but also a filial tribute to the memory of his father:

True soldier of his country and the sacred cross—
He counted gain, not loss,
Perils and nameless horrors of the embattled field,
While he had help to yield.

But not where 'mid wild cheers the awful battle broke,—
A hell of fire and smoke,—
He to heroic death went forth with soul elate;
Harder his lonely fate.

Searching where most was needed, worst of all endured,
Sufferers he found immured,—
Tented apart because of fatal, foul disease,—
Balm brought he unto these;

Celestial balm, the spirit's holy ministry,
He brought, and only he;
Where men who blanched not at the battle's shell and shot
Trembled, and entered not.

Yet life to him was oh, most dear,—home, children, wife,—
But, dearer still than life,
Duty—that passion of the soul which from the sod
Alone lifts man to God.

The pesthouse entering fearless—stricken he fearless fell,
Knowing that all was well;
The high, mysterious Power whereof mankind has dreamed
To him not distant seemed.

So nobly died this unknown hero of the war;
And heroes, near and far,
Sleep now in graves like his unfamed in song or story—
But theirs is more than glory!

The same truth is emphasized in his little poem "A Hero of Peace," in memory of Robert Ross,

who lost his life in defending the sacredness of the elective franchise. It is a call to a deeper and truer interest, on the part of the average citizen, in the things that make for civic purity and betterment:

> Thy deed, thy date, thy name
> Are wreathed with deathless flowers.
> Thy fate shall be the guiding flame
> That lights to nobler hours.

Also in his recent volume, In the Heights, will be found a group of songs which both by content and intent discover the mountain peaks of civic achievement which it should ever be the ambition of high-souled men to scale. One who would understand Mr. Gilder's thought about the privilege and worth of service in the betterment and upbuilding of the city and the state will do well to read "Inauguration Day," "Builders of the State," "For the City Clubs," and, perhaps best of all, "The Great Citizen," written in memory of Abram S. Hewitt, and read by Bishop Potter at the funeral of that highly influential man:

> Talents and wealth to him were but a trust
> To lift his hapless brother from the dust.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Following the truth, he led his fellow men,—
> Through years and virtues the great citizen!
>
> By being great he made the city great,—
> Serving the city, he upheld the state.
>
> So shall the city win a purer fame
> Led by the living splendor of his name.

The illustration of this phase of our poet's message may well be concluded with an extract from "The Great Remembrance"—lines read at the annual reunion of the Society of the Army of the Potomac, in Faneuil Hall, 1893. In these lines we see the wide sweep of the poet's thought. Service, helpfulness, brotherhood, and kindliness are not merely individual qualities. The duty and privilege of all this is not confined to the individual, but belongs as well to all the organizations and institutions of humanity. The meaning of society and government is human uplift, a thoughtful serviceableness that shall be world-wide and mutually beneficial and helpful. Hear him as he shadows forth the high privilege and the holy duty of this favored land and people:

Land that we love! Thou Future of the World!
Thou refuge of the noble heart oppressed!
Oh, never be thy shining image hurled
From its high place in the adoring breast
Of him who worships thee with jealous love!
Keep thou thy starry forehead as the dove
All white, and to the eternal Dawn inclined!
Thou art not for thyself but for mankind,
And to despair of thee were to despair
Of man, of man's high destiny, of God!
. . . . . .
To despair of thee! Ah no!
For thou thyself art Hope, Hope of the World thou art!

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT ILLUSTRATED

THE SPIRITUAL NOTE

All who have carefully studied the work of Mr. Gilder have been impressed with its high moral quality and its rich spiritual suggestiveness. He deals with those deeper instincts, feelings, and aspirings

> which, be they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain-light of all our day;
> Are yet a master-light of all our seeing.

In an article written some fifteen years since, and published in The Christian Advocate, Professor Winchester, of Wesleyan University, thus estimates the poetry of Mr. Gilder: "The most striking things in his work are a certain high seriousness and a wealth of spiritual suggestion. His gift is distinctively lyrical, but his lyrics are of an uncommon variety. They are the lyrics not of passion or of action, but of thought. Their emotion is born, in almost every case, of some spiritual perception. The best of these sonnets are moments of insight, in which some truth, too large or too subtle to be confined within the limits of straight dogmatic statement, rises against the inner eye. In these days, when a vulgar realism

is the fashion in fiction, and a pretty artificiality is the fashion in poetry, it is refreshing to come upon verse which dwells habitually upon the higher planes of thought and feeling." And Dr. William V. Kelley, editor of the Methodist Review, in an article in that periodical in September, 1900, entitled "The Religion of Gilder's Poetry," writes: "If better, worthier poetry than Richard Watson Gilder's is now being written anywhere in America, we do not know where to find it. It is rich, delicate, refined, artistic, beautiful. In it there is nothing flippant or cheap, irreverent or carnal. Its spirituality is an antidote to the manifold materialism of our time. . . . Most of it is essentially lyrical, full of feeling, deep, genuine, intense, uttering in simple poetry, and in words felicitous, musical, effective, its cry of aspiration, of love, of faith, of admiration, of patriotism, of adoration. It is ethical in every note, and makes pervasively for righteousness."

In such a poet there is of necessity a constant play and interchange of the religious concepts of the ages with the poet's own interpretation and use of these concepts. In this respect he is the heir of all the ages, and his debt to "dear old Anonymous" is simply inconceivable. Indeed, Mr. Gilder himself acknowledges that the old leaven of his fathers is deep in his mind and heart, and that he cannot

help thinking in, and with, the symbols of Christianity. But the poet does not take these religious thoughts or concepts in their bare and sinewy outlines; they are "clothed upon" with his own spiritual insight and genius. Through his gracious gift and high endowment they take on forms of beauty, and the truth that would often be rejected because of its literal severity and hardness is gladly accepted and utilized through the poet's revelation of its inner beauty and spiritual power; thus fulfilling Van Dyke's word that "life is divine when duty is a joy." Mr. Gilder assuredly does not purposely attempt any illustration of dogmatic or traditional religion or theology. Quite likely he would dissent from many of our attempts to state, and define, and compass, in formal language, those deep, illimitable, and in some respects indefinable truths of the soul-life. None the less is he influenced by them, and as they are warp and woof of his life and thought he must and he does speak out the thought and conviction of his heart. He could not be true to himself and do otherwise; indeed, this is his expressed motto:

> Forth with thy thought!
> Soon 'twill be naught,
> And thou in thy tomb.
> Now is air, now is room.
> Down with false shame;
> Reck not of fame;

Dread not man's spite;
Quench not thy light.
This be thy creed,
This be thy deed:
"Hide not thy heart!"

If God is, he made
Sunshine and shade,
Heaven and hell;
This we know well.
Dost thou believe?
Do not deceive;
Scorn not thy faith—
If 'tis a wraith,
Soon it will fly.
Thou, who must die,
Hide not thy heart!

This is my creed;
This be my deed:
Faith, or a doubt,
I shall speak out
And hide not my heart.

Practically all the great and cardinal Christian truths are some way touched by the muse of our poet. One of his books is entitled The New Day. It is a treatment of love, of the power of love to suffuse and spiritualize, mold and influence. In delineating this that Professor Winchester rightly calls the "new day love makes for itself when it rises pure and fulgent in any human life," he shows how love interprets the mystery and pain, the doubt and fear, and all the deeper happenings and feelings of the universe of life. In "And Were That Best" we hear the voice of one who calls for

a life of ease and rest, void of struggle and pain and strife; to whom is pointed out the worth of the strife and the toil, under the inspiration and guidance of love:

> And were that best, Love, rest serene and deep!
> Gone labor and desire; no arduous steep
> To climb, no songs to sing, no prayers to pray,
> No help for those who perish by the way,
> No laughter 'midst our tears, no tears to weep!
> . . . . . .
> Oh, rather, far, the sorrow-bringing gleam,
> The living day's long agony and strife!
> Rather strong love in pain; the waking woe!

If one would like to see how Christ's love reveals the folly of boasting one's privations and pains let him read "There Is Nothing New Under the Sun." If he would understand the abnegation of a pure and perfect love let him ponder "I Will Be Brave for Thee," with its closing lines, exquisite in their self-abandon:

> If thy one thought of me or hindereth
> Or hurteth thy sweet soul—then grant me grace
> To be forgotten, though that grace be death!

In "Body and Soul" there is finely and felicitously expressed the true relation of flesh and spirit in a pure and permanent love. As the external symmetry and beauty of a cathedral may attract the eye and attention of the traveler, and draw his steps across the threshold, only to find that after all the cathedral's deep meaning and abiding

power is in its inner grace and symbolism, its light, and music, and spiritual suggestiveness, so the body must be the doorway to the inner shrine and holy of holies:

> Moved by the body's outer majesty
> I entered in thy silent, sacred shrine;
> 'Twas then, all suddenly and unaware,
> Thou didst reveal, O maiden Love! to me,
> This beautiful, singing, holy soul of thine.

If one is inclined to be bitter and hard, to blame God for the mystery, and hurt, and pain, let him read over and over again "The Sower." If he feels it not now, the day will surely come when the concluding refrain will sing its truth and comfort in his aching heart:

> Thou only art wise,
> God of the earth and skies!
> And I praise thee, again and again,
> For the Sower whose name is Pain.

Where among moderns will you find anything that speaks more beautifully or powerfully of the pervasive, ennobling, purifying, and inspiriting quality of a deep and genuine love than in "My Songs Are All of Thee"?—

> My songs are all of thee. . .
> . . . . . .
> I think no thought that is not thine, no breath
> Of life I breathe beyond thy sanctity;
> Thou art the voice that silence uttereth,
> And of all sound thou art the sense. From thee
> The music of my song, and what it saith
> Is but the beat of thy heart, throbbed through me.

Many men there are, aye, and women too, in many of the ways of life, who can respond to the truth enshrined in these lines. The power of a great and noble love overshadows them, beats in their blood, broods in their moods, and comes to being in their worthy and noble achievements. And how nobly is the purpose and outcome of it all expressed! This love of which the poet sings has its mystery and sorrow, its darkness and pain. It is part and parcel of life, and like life it is neither all sunshine nor all shade, all prosperity nor all adversity, all pleasure nor all pain, but a true composite, full of the changeful experiences that go to the making of human character. Only let it be true, and truly noble, pure, and pervasive; not the gay and fleeting shadow, but the deep and abiding substance and reality: let it be this, and the issue is not doubtful. So our poet-prophet and seer feels and knows:

> Through love to light! Oh, wonderful the way
> That leads from darkness to the perfect day!
> From darkness and from sorrow of the night
> To morning that comes singing o'er the sea.
> Through love to light! Through light, O God, to thee,
> Who art the love of love, the eternal light of light!

In his next book we have the same general theme, but it is now lifted from the earthlies into the heavenlies. It is become in truth, as our author entitles

it, The Celestial Passion. Without being in the slightest degree theologic or dogmatic, it is the poetic conception and treatment of New Testament love. Here we have enshrined and bodied forth, in lyrics of abiding beauty and truth, the love that the Master had in mind when he said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It is the very love that John said was "the fulfilling of the law," and that he makes synonymous with God, for "God is love." And still again it is the love to which Paul gives the eminency, declaring it superior to faith and hope, and which he glorifies with all high and holy qualities as he joyously proclaims that it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." In these and other lyrics he has touched and interpreted the whole range of spiritual yearning and aspiration.

It is not the present purpose further to analyze or estimate Mr. Gilder's poetry, or assign to it its place in the world of verse. That undoubtedly will be done in due time by more worthy and competent hands. Indeed, it has already been done in part. The task before us is much more limited and simple. Our design is to show how the poet

has been touched and influenced, consciously or otherwise, by that great body of Christian truth that has been the slow deposit of the centuries; how he has interpreted and used that truth, and applied it to the questions and yearnings, the hopes and fears, the doubt and faith of modern life.

SIN

The reality of sin, of temptation and a tempter, is implicit in Christian thought. Mr. Gilder's is not the type of mind to dwell on this phase of life with much of dogmatism, detail, or definiteness. That he realizes, however, the shadow of sin, that he understands the power of the tempter, the strength of temptation, and the blight that falls on man's life as he comes under this baleful spell, is clearly evident. His "Temptation" has caught something of the dramatic imagery of Job, the vivid symbolism of Peter's conception of Satan, and the keen insight of Paul that perceived and penetrated Satanic hypocrisy and disguise:

> Not alone in pain and gloom
> Does the abhorrèd tempter come;
> Not in light alone and pleasure
> Proffers he the poisoned measure.
> When the soul doth rise
> Nearest to its native skies,
> There the exalted spirit finds
> Borne upon the heavenly winds
> Satan, in an angel's guise,
> With voice divine and innocent eyes.

In "The Prisoner's Thought" he has interpreted for us that subtle interplay of high and low, of vice and virtue, of moral struggle with its alternations of failure and success, that has been the theme and well-nigh the despair of many earnest, deep-souled men. Amiel realized it when he wrote, "The germs of all things are in every heart, and the greatest criminals, as well as the greatest heroes, are but different modes of ourselves." Browning touched it in "Rabbi Ben Ezra" when he showed the discrepancy between thought and deed, between desire and achievement; and Paul portrayed it in his letter to the Romans, finding hope and deliverance in Christ alone. Gilder's Prisoner illustrates this struggle and moral conflict—the power of sin and the force of holiness striving for the mastery. One moment he cries:

> Here let me rot then—there's a taste one has
> For just the best of all things, even of sin.
> He's a poor devil who in deepest hell
> Knows no keen relish for the worst that is,—
> The very acme of intensest pain,—
> Nor smacks charred lips at thoughts of some dear crime
> The sweetest, deadliest, damnablest of all.
> Sometimes I hug that hellish happiness;
> And then a loathing falls upon my soul
> For what I was, and am, and still must be.

The mood changes; the better vision rises in his eyes; the higher yearning controls and asserts itself:

But suddenly my soul is pure as yours;
My thoughts as clean; my spirit is as free
As any man's, or any purest woman's.
. . . . . .
Why, this my soul has thoughts that strike
Into the very heights and depths of Heaven.

Is it any wonder that the man thus troubled and tossed, finding himself by turns weak and strong, alternately plunged into depths of despair and lifted on the hilltops of hope, speculates whether or not, sometime, here or hereafter,

The thinking part of us we name the soul
Can ever get away from its old self;
Can wash the earth all off from it, that so
It really will be, what I sometimes seem—
As sinless as a little child at birth,
With all a woman's love for all things pure,
And all a grown man's strength to do the right?

The power of love to recover a man who has been caught in the mesh and is bewildered and lost in the maze of sin is indicated in "A Soul Lost, and Found." The man of genius and strength is moving along the high planes of life and worthy work. His friends follow his achievements with admiration and joy. To him "Life was love, life was art." But, alas! he slips and falls:

Now see the mire
Soil him and swallow!
Heaven! what guerdon
Worth such a cost!
Love, art, life,—lost, all lost.

Is there any hope of restoration, any chance for one who has sinned so grievously? Yes. It is the story of the Prodigal lifted into life and hope by the power of love:

Down to the pallid
Figure of death
Love's face is pressing;
. . . .
Behold now, a moving,
A flutter of life!
Forth from the starkness,
Horror, and slime,
See, he doth climb.
With himself is the strife;
Back to the loving
From mire and the darkness,
Back to the sun!
He has fought—he has won.

Two of his little poems breathe, on this general theme, the very sentiment of the Sermon on the Mount. In one of them, "Scorn," we see the pity and forbearance of the Master with the sudden, outflashing sin of passion, and his severity and scorn for the sin of nice and selfish calculation—for the man whose heart is bitter and black but who always manages to keep just outside the clutches of law, civil or religious:

Who are the men that good men most despise?
Not they who, ill begot and spawned in shame,
Riot and rob, or rot before men's eyes,—
Who basely live, and dying leave no name.
. . . . . .

He, only, is the despicable one
  Who lightly sells his honor as a shield
For fawning knaves, to hide them from the sun;—
  Too nice for crime, yet, coward, he doth yield
For crime a shelter. Swift to Paradise
The contrite thief, not Judas with his price!

In the other, "On a Portrait of Servetus," we are reminded that the spirit of hatred and opposition, the persecution for righteousness' sake that Jesus foresaw, still exists, yea, and will exist. The form changes, the spirit survives:

Servetus! that which slew thee lives to-day,
  Though in new forms it taints our modern air;
Still in heaven's name the deeds of hell are done;
Still on the highroad, 'neath the noonday sun,
  The fires of hate are lit for them who dare
Follow their Lord along the untrodden way.

SPIRIT AND LIFE

One of the fundamentals of our faith is that Christianity is a matter of the inner life and spirit. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The form is a matter of indifference; the motive and purpose is the essence. Ages since, the writer of Proverbs saw this and counseled, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." And this also is one of the deepest teachings of Jesus—a teaching that he illustrated with lip and life. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," and that richest of the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall

see God," are proof of this. In three or four exquisite lyrics Mr. Gilder shows how deeply this truth has touched his thought. And one who knows him feels sure that with him it is not merely a matter of the intellect, but a principle of his thinking and living. We note the influence of this truth in "Holy Land." The poet is there, at least in spirit. He conceives and constructs for himself the whole scene—the Asian country, the Judean hills, the Galilean plains, mountain, river, sun and sea and moon—all so perfectly known and familiar to the Man of Nazareth, "who did no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth":

> The air we breathe, he breathed—the very air
> That took the mold and music of his high
> And Godlike speech. Since then shall mortal dare
> With base thought front the ever-sacred sky—
> Soil with foul deed the ground whereon he laid
> In holy death his pale, immortal head!

And in the following simple lines we see again the deep desire for life that shall be true to the high trust given, without soil, or stain, or blemish:

> When to sleep I must
> Where my fathers sleep;
> When fulfilled the trust,
> And the mourners weep;
> When, though free from rust,
> Sword hath lost its worth—
> Let me bring to earth
> No dishonored dust.

The purity for which our poet pleads is a purity that controls the mind and governs its output in speech. As the crystal waters of a purling brook speak of a pure and bountiful source, so the words and images of a man suggest the character of his "chamber of imagery." Our author's delight in mental cleanness, in its influence and value to the world, is evident when he sings:

> Thy mind is like a crystal brook
> Wherein clean creatures live at ease,
> In sun-bright waves or shady nook.
> Birds sing above it,
> The warm-breathed cattle love it,
> It doth sweet childhood please.
>
> Accursed be he by whom it were undone,
> Or thing or thought whose presence
> The birds and beasts would loathly shun,
> Would make its crystal waters foully run,
> And drive sweet childhood from its pleasance.

As one reads this he catches through the music of the lines the refrain of the Master's teaching: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." But best of all these lyrics of purity is the one we have in A Week's Calendar. It is the third in the Calendar, and is titled "Keep Pure Thy Soul." One

is wise who commits to memory this perfect gem and repeats it as he begins the work of each day. The very heart of the New Testament teaching is here. As the pure soul is the fit and the only organ for the vision of the Eternal, so it is the medium through which one can get, and alone can get, the deep delight, the perfect joy, the rich meaning of earth and time, of heaven and eternity:

> Keep pure thy soul!
> Then shalt thou take the whole
> Of delight;
> Then, without a pang,
> Thine shall be all of beauty whereof the poet sang—
> The perfume, and the pageant, the melody, the mirth
> Of the golden day and the starry night;
> Of heaven, and of earth.
> Oh, keep pure thy soul!

THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

One of the teachings of Christianity touches the mystery and meaning of suffering and pain. Perhaps the classic note of Christian thought is heard in the passage in Hebrews, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." And Paul is an illustrator of the enriched influence and the enlarged efficiency of one who allows himself to be rightly instructed,

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exercised, disciplined, and developed by the ministry of pain. That all this seemingly dark and bitter side of life is an essential part of God's educative process cannot be well doubted by one who has studied the revelation of God in literature and in life. "It pleased God to make the Captain of our Salvation perfect through sufferings." He could not otherwise be perfected. M. Charles Wagner truly says that a suffering God is a necessity. Otherwise man would be greater and nobler than God. It is only a shallow and meager view of life that ignores pain, and suffering, and sorrow. This was the error of much pagan philosophy and religion, and is the error underlying a pseudo-faith to-day, masquerading under the guise of a hyphenated name, and carefully devised to deceive the unwary. The contrast between this shallowness and self-deception on the one hand, and the clear and resolute vision of Christianity on the other, is suggested by Mr. Gilder in "Two Worlds." In the one we see the type that brushes aside all save ease and pleasure, and external peace and beauty; in the other, the type that longs for peace and beauty but will not be content save as these are grounded in eternal foundations—will not waive or blink any of life's realities, but with all the strength and wisdom of an awakened soul will face the problem, enter the thick darkness, and through

turmoil, and strife, and pain, and blood, fight its way at last to abiding peace:

I. THE VENUS OF MILO

Grace, majesty, and the calm bliss of life;
No conscious war 'twixt human will and duty;
Here breathes, forever free from pain and strife,
The old, untroubled pagan world of beauty.

II. MICHAEL ANGELO'S SLAVE

Of life, of death the mystery and woe,
Witness in this mute, carven stone the whole.
That suffering smile were never fashioned so
Before the world had wakened to a soul.

The same truth is taught in "The Gift." Here Life comes and invites one to a home of pleasure rich in all priceless and pleasurable things. He hurries on with eager feet, only to be deeply disappointed in the earlier stages of the way, but abundantly rejoiced and rewarded at the end:

I entered the oaken door;
Within, no ray of light;
I saw no golden store,
My heart stood still with fright;
To curse Life was I fain;
Then one unseen before
Laid in my own her hand,
And said: "Come thou and know
This is the House of Woe;—
I am Life's sister, Pain."

Through many a breathless way,
In dark, on dizzying height,
She led me through the day
And into the dreadful night.

My soul was sore distressed
And wildly I longed for rest;—
Till a chamber met my sight,
Far off, and hid, and still,
With diamonds all bedight
And every precious thing;
Not even a god might will
More beauty there to bring.

In what seems to me one of the choicest and most suggestive of his shorter poems, "Life Is the Cost," there is emphasized, after the manner of the Impressionists, the truth that all worthy achievement is the outcome of pain and sacrifice and loss:

Life is the cost.
Behold yon tower,
That heavenward lifts
To the cloudy drifts—
Like a flame, like a flower!
What lightness, what grace,
What a dream of power!
One last endeavor
One stone to place—
And it stands forever.

A slip, a fall;
A cry, a call;
Turn away, all's done.
Stands the tower in the sun
Forever and a day.
On the pavement below
The crimson stain
Will be worn away
In the ebb and flow;
The tower will remain.
Life is the cost.

Who that reads it but is reminded of the heroes and heroines on "fame's eternal beadroll worthy to be fyled"; the great army of the sacrificial ones who have given themselves for the upbuilding of the world and the uplifting of their fellows? And the Christian recalls the central fact of his faith, the attractive power of the cross and Him of whom it was said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." But the fullest treatment of this theme is found in "Non Sine Dolore." It is too long to quote, and yet it cannot be overlooked in the consideration of this part of our subject. Our author pushes the truth of the purifying, ennobling, bliss-imparting mission of pain to its furthest limit; implying in the daring reach of his thought that it is even an element in the enrichment and progress of the eternal life! And since God must needs be a suffering God, one who has felt the woe and weight of the world, why may it not be so still? Who will dare deny that the elements that make for character growth here may not also, at least possibly, make for like growth there?—

> Soul of man, oh, be thou bold,
> And to the brink of thought draw near, behold!
> Where, on the earth's green sod,
> Where, where in all the universe of God,
> Hath strife forever ceased?
> . . . . . .
> No Life without a pang! It were not Life,
> If ended were the strife—

Man were not man, nor God were truly God!
  See from the sod
The lark thrill skyward in an arrow of song:
Even so from pain and wrong
Upsprings the exultant spirit, wild and free.
He knows not all the joy of liberty
Who never yet was crushed 'neath heavy woe.
. . . . .
  No passing burden is our earthly sorrow
That shall depart in some mysterious morrow.
'Tis His one universe where'er we are—
One changeless law from sun to viewless star.
Were sorrow evil here, evil it were forever,
Beyond the scope and help of our most keen endeavor.
  God doth not dote,
His everlasting purpose shall not fail.
Here where our ears are weary with the wail
And weeping of the sufferers; there where the Pleiads float—
Here, there, forever, pain most dread and dire
Doth bring the intensest bliss, the dearest and most sure.
'Tis not from Life aside, it doth endure
Deep in the secret heart of all existence.
It is the inward fire,
The heavenly urge, and the divine insistence.
  Uplift thine eyes, O Questioner, from the sod!
It were no longer Life,
If ended were the strife;
Man were not man, God were not truly God.

GOD IN THE WORLD

The Divine Immanence, the conscious sense and recognition of God as present, interested, and active in the world life, is a truth that finds expression in the work of Mr. Gilder. Perhaps the most elaborate and purposeful depiction of this is found in "Recognition." Here we find the

poet's conception and unfolding of the creation story—the existent God; the forthcoming from him of all forms of matter and life in ever-developing types of power and knowledge, till the summit is reached in One who is able to know and have kinship with the Creator:

> Then other forms more fine
> Streamed ceaseless on my sight, until at last,
> Rising and turning its slow gaze about
> Across the abysmal void, the mighty child
> Of the supreme, divine Omnipotence—
> Creation, born of God, by Him begot,
> Conscious in MAN, no longer blind and dumb,
> Beheld and knew its father and its God.

The impossibility of fitting God into our little forms, of concluding and imprisoning him in our definitions, of keeping him within the limits of one sole faith, of making him altogether such a one as ourselves—all this is well set forth in a stanza in one of his hymns:

> In myriad forms, by myriad names,
> Men seek to bind and mold thee;
> But thou dost melt, like wax in flames,
> The cords that would enfold thee.
> Who madest life and light,
> Bring'st morning after night,
> Who all things did'st create—
> No majesty, nor state,
> Nor word, nor world can hold thee!

How many Christians there are who seem to put the best things of their faith into the far future; who are ever hoping, and praying, and waiting for

a better day, forgetful of the great truth that God is a Spirit, able to realize himself in conscious experience now as at any time. Nothing is clearer in the gospels than Jesus' sense of the nearness of God and consciousness of oneness with him. The possibility of this as an experience for men of to-day is a teaching of Jesus that has been caught by this poet:

> Heardst thou these wanderers reasoning of a time
> When men more near the Eternal One shall climb?
> How like the newborn child, who cannot tell
> A mother's arm that wraps it warm and well!
> Leaves of His rose; drops in His sea that flow—
> Are they, alas, so blind they may not know
> Here, in this breathing world of joy and fear,
> They can no nearer get to God than here.

That the world of nature is a revelation of God, a medium of the Divine utterance, is as evident to Mr. Gilder as to the psalmist. Indeed, the echo of the nineteenth psalm is most distinctly heard in "Day unto Day Uttereth Speech." Though our eyes are so dim, our ears so dull, our minds so heavy, that we often miss the voice and teaching of God in the ordinary sights and sounds of day and night, yet such are the suggestions of sunrise and sunset that here at least we see and hear and learn:

> But when the day doth close there is one word
> That's writ amid the sunset's golden embers;
> And one at morn; by them our hearts are stirred:
> Splendor of Dawn, and Evening that remembers;
> These are the rhymes of God; thus, line on line,
> Our souls are moved to thoughts that are divine.

Three little poems give us our author's sense of the worth of worship and devotion. The living, ever-present God is worthy of our adoration. It is evident that one who could so write must himself have been deeply influenced by the Christian practice of daily prayer and weekly worship. The value of these Christian institutions could be so felicitously expressed only by one who has had experience of that value:

a. TO REST FROM WEARY WORK

To rest from weary work one day of seven;
One day to turn our backs upon the world,
Its soil wash from us, and strive on to Heaven—
Whereto we daily climb, but quick are hurled
Down to the pit of human pride and sin.
Help me, ye powers celestial! to come nigh;
Ah, let me catch one little glimpse within
The heavenly city, lest my spirit die.
These be my guides, my messengers, my friends:
Books of wise poets; the musician's art;
The ocean whose deep music never ends;
The silence of the forest's shadowy heart;
And, too, the brooding organ's solemn blare,
And kneeling multitudes' low-murmuring prayer.

b. O GLORIOUS SABBATH SUN

O glorious Sabbath sun, thou art
A balm and blessing to my heart;
Dark sorrow flies, and in thy shine
Bursts o'er the world a flood divine.

So may the light beyond the skies
Illume and bless my inward eyes,
That each new day may bring to me
The splendor of eternity

c. MORNING AND NIGHT

The mountain that the morn doth kiss
  Glad greets its shining neighbor;
Lord! heed the homage of our bliss,
  The incense of our labor.

Now the long shadows eastward creep,
  The golden sun is setting;
Take, Lord! the worship of our sleep,
  The praise of our forgetting.

FAITH

Faith is surely a foundation principle in Christianity. Too often, however, the emphasis has been misplaced. Too much it has been insisted that we must accept and believe the dogmas, and creeds, and theologies of the Fathers; that, too, not specially because they were true, but because the Fathers believed them true. Not infrequently men who believed in God, and in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit have been condemned and branded as heretics because, in truth, they did not believe some other man's belief in or about God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. Whittier exposed the fallacy of this sort of faith when he wrote:

I know how well the fathers taught,
What work the later schoolmen wrought;
I reverence old-time faith and men,
But God is near us now as then;
His force of love is still unspent,
His hate of sin as immanent;
And still the measure of our needs
Outgrows the cramping bounds of creeds.

—*The Meeting.*

The faith that Christianity demands is faith in the realities; faith, for example, in God vital, active, and fatherly, not in some man's explanation or dogmatism about these things; faith, again, in the atonement, not in some man's theory of that elemental and unshakable fact; faith in the presence and inspirational power of the Spirit to guide and counsel, to comfort, warn, and instruct; not faith in some man's philosophical conception of the relation of the Spirit to the doctrine of the Trinity. Now, that Richard Watson Gilder might not be able to subscribe some of the creeds of Christendom is probably true. It is quite possible that if put on the rack of categorical questioning he would not satisfy the critical judgment of some synods or conferences. And this is not said in depreciation of the requirements of synod, or conference, or consistory. These have their rightful function, and the man who seeks such fellowship should be able to shape his belief in a form of expression conformable to the general consensus of the body with which he would unite. Mr. Gilder is no acceptor of a secondhand faith. He cannot take the creeds, and beliefs, and forms of other men and other days, and make them his own, without at least deep and careful investigation. Before he can say, "I believe," the belief confessed must first of all compel his judgment and constrain

his heart. This phase of the truth he has set forth vividly in "Credo":

> How easily my neighbor chants his creed,
> Kneeling beside me in the House of God.
> His "I believe" he chants, and "I believe,"
> With cheerful iteration and consent—
> Watching meantime the white, slow sunbeam move
> Across the aisle, or listening to the bird
> Whose free, wild song sounds through the open door.
>
> Thou God supreme—I too, I too, believe!
> But oh! forgive if this one human word,
> Binding the deep and breathless thought of thee
> And my own conscience with an iron band,
> Stick in my throat. I cannot say it, thus—
> This "I believe" that doth thyself obscure;
> This rod to smite; this barrier; this blot
> On thy most unimaginable face
> And soul of majesty.
>
> 'Tis not man's faith
> In thee that he proclaims in echoed phrase,
> But faith in man; faith not in thine own Christ,
> But in another man's dim thought of him.

But that Mr. Gilder has a firm and true faith in the essential elements of our general Christianity cannot well be doubted by any careful and sympathetic student of his writings. Perhaps the completest expression of his attitude, of the temper of his mind, and of the genuineness and fearlessness of his faith, is found in the poem "In Palestine":

Ah no! that sacred land,
Where fell the wearied feet of the lone Christ,
Robs not the soul of faith. I shall set down
The thought was in my heart. If that hath lost
Aught of its child-belief, 'twas long ago,
Not there in Palestine; and if 'twere lost,
He were a coward who should fear to lose
A blind, hereditary, thoughtless faith,—
Comfort of fearful minds, a straw to catch at
On the deep-gulfed and tempest-driven sea.

Full well I know how shallow spirits lack
The essence, flinging from them but the form;
I have seen souls lead barren lives and cursed,—
Bereft of light, and all the grace of life,—
Because for them the inner truth was lost
In the frail symbol—hated, shattered, spurned.

But faith that lives forever is not bound
To any outward semblance, any scheme
Fine-wrought of human wonder, or self-love,
Or the base fear of never-ending pain.
True faith doth face the blackness of despair,—
Blank faithlessness itself; bravely it holds
To duty unrewarded and unshared;
It loves where all is loveless; it endures
In the long passion of the soul for God.

Lest anyone should think this man a careless and flippant iconoclast, casting aside things old and reverend without due consideration, let me call attention to the lines "Despise Not Thou." Here we see how the poet recognizes and holds to the good and true in the ancient forms and creeds. A thing is not always true because it is new, nor worthless because it comes freighted with the fragrance and faith of the past. Without doubt

the memory of his father's faith, and of the noble and useful life that was the rich fruitage of that faith, has steadied and sobered him, and has kept him grounded in the fundamentals the while he has been free and open to the change of form necessitated by the growth of human thought and experience:

Despise not thou thy father's ancient creed;
Of his pure life it was the golden thread
Whereon bright days were gathered, bead by bead,
Till death laid low that dear and reverend head.
From olden faith how many a glorious deed
Hath lit the world; its blood-stained banner led
The martyrs heavenward; yea, it was the seed
Of knowledge, whence our modern freedom spread.
Not always has man's *credo* proved a snare—
But a deliverance, a sign, a flame
To purify the dense and pestilent air,
Writing on pitiless heavens one pitying name;
And 'neath the shadow of the dread eclipse
It shines on dying eyes and pallid lips.

CHRIST

Christianity concretes itself in Christ. He is the Father's complete and final unveiling. Thought about him is definitive, attitude toward him is final. As Whittier says:

Alone, O Love ineffable!
Thy saving name is given;
To turn aside from thee is hell,
To walk with thee is heaven!

Now, the influence of Christ is probably the most evident thing in the writings of this poet. In

some way he has touched practically all the vital facts in his life, and with a depth of feeling and an intensity of passion that reveal his personal attitude. His faith in the "Christ of Judea" never falters or wavers. He notes the varying views of men concerning the Man of Galilee; and however he is conceived, whether as Divine, or human, or Divine-human, he is still, in our poet's thought, "the one altogether lovely and the chiefest among ten thousand." Following him is the only rational attitude and purpose of the life; fealty and devotion to him the supremest wisdom, and the way into the experience of the highest good. Nearly all the salient features of the Christ life have some way been touched and depicted by his ever-brooding thought and always-busy pen:

> What babe newborn is this that in a manger cries?
> Near on her lowly bed his happy mother lies.
> O, see, the air is shaken with white and heavenly wings—
> This is the Lord of all the earth, this is the King of kings!

Such incidents as the driving out of the money changers from the temple, and the supper at Emmaus, with their spiritual suggestions, hold his thought and compel embodiment in enduring verse. The atoning power of sacrifice and death is suggested in the lines previously quoted, "Life Is the Cost," while in a little verse entitled "Cost"

the power and influence of Christ's sacrifice is vividly unfolded:

> Because Heaven's cost is Hell, and perfect joy
> Hurts as hurts sorrow; and because we win
> Some boon of grace with the dread cost of sin,
> Or suffering born of sin; because the alloy
> Of blood but makes the bliss of victory brighter;
> Because true worth hath surest proof herein,
> That it should be reproached, and called akin
> To evil things—black making white the whiter;
> Because no cost seems great near this—that He
> Should pay the ransom wherewith we were priced;
> And none could name a darker infamy
> Than that a God was spit upon,—enticed
> By those he came to save, to the accursèd tree,—
> For this I know that Christ indeed is Christ.

In "Easter" we have a specific treatment of the Resurrection, while in two contrasted poems, "Egypt" and "Syria," we have an illustration of the vitalizing quality of the risen Christ set over against the dull and hopeless faith of paganism. In Egypt the mighty monuments, the empty tombs, the elaborate housings of the dead, all the honor paid to and all the care and thought lavished upon the dead, fill our poet with the sense of the reality, the pervasiveness, and the power of Death:

> Not here the Dead, but Death: alone, supreme;
> In Egypt death was real—life, a winged dream.

In Syria the reverse is true; the empty tomb, the very lack of monuments and memorials, the

absence of tribute to the power of death, all these suggest that death is only a phase of life:

I thought in Syria, Life was more than Death.
A tomb there was forsaken of its dead,
But Death filled not the place; here with bowed head
Worships the world forever at the tread
Of one who lived, who liveth, and shall live,—
Whose grave is but a footstep on the sod;
Men kiss the ground where living feet have trod.
Here not to Death, but Life, they worship give.
August is Death, but this one tomb is rife
With a more mighty presence; it is Life.

If our author believes in the resurrection of the body, it is hardly of the body as we know it. Rather, I think, he is touched and influenced by that suggestive and shadowy phrase of Paul's, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." And it is this latter that Mr. Gilder seems to believe shall come forth to the light and glory of the eternal day. In his little volume, In Palestine, two poems, "Resurrection" and "As Soars the Eagle," seem fairly to establish this view. In a sense they are complementary. In the first noted, the disembodied spirit comes back to the body only to find itself limited, cabined, cribbed, and hampered:

Overwhelmed was my soul with its shackles; I grieved, I lamented
As a prisoner dragged back to his cell, as an eagle recaptured.

In the second, the released and disembodied spirit fares forth into the eternal morning with

the joy and freedom of the eagle, soaring in the sun's eye:

Child of Him, the untrembling One,
Oh, prove thee worthy of thy birth!

Let no ill betray thee!
Let no death dismay thee!

The eagle seeks the sky,
Nor fears the infinite light;
Thus, soul of mine, escape the night
And 'gainst the morning fly!

We come now to a series of poems in "The Celestial Passion," in "Lyrics," and elsewhere in his writings that show the surpassing influence on Mr. Gilder's thought of the thought and life of Christ. If we may judge by his writings, the Christ is the commanding figure in our poet's spiritual vision. His faith is faith in Christ; his hope is hope in Christ; his life is life in Christ. And this Christ is not merely temporal and transient, the Christ of a day or an age or a people; he is for all ages and all people. Without doubt Mr. Gilder would subscribe Principal Shairp's magnificent sonnet:

Subtlest thought shall fail and learning falter,
Churches change, forms perish, systems go,
But our human needs they will not alter,
Christ no after age shall e'er outgrow.

Yea, Amen! O changeless One. Thou only
Art life's guide and spiritual goal,
Thou the light across the dark vale lonely,—
Thou the eternal haven of the soul.

In "The Passing of Christ" Mr. Gilder considers the phase of modern thought that would displace and dethrone Christ because of the new discoveries in the physical realm and the new interpretations in the intellectual realm. Because of these it is claimed that the place and power of Christ is waning in human affairs. The attitude of the objector and detractor is vividly portrayed in thought and language that will repay careful study. Indeed, the whole poem should be read and reread. We quote the poet's reply to the objections and questions that have been raised·

Ah no! If the Christ you mean
Shall pass from this time, this scene,
These hearts, these lives of ours,
'Tis but as the summer flowers
Pass, but return again,
To gladden a world of men.
For he—the only, the true—
  In each age, in each waiting heart,
Leaps into life anew;
  Though he pass, he shall not depart.

Behold him now where he comes!
  Not the Christ of our subtile creeds,
But the lord of our hearts, of our homes,
  Of our hopes, our prayers, our needs;
The brother of want and blame,
  The lover of women and men,
With a love that puts to shame
  All passions of mortal ken;—
. . . . .

Ah no, thou life of the heart,
Never shalt thou depart!
Not till the leaven of God
Shall lighten each human clod;
Not till the world shall climb
To thy height serene, sublime,
Shall the Christ who enters our door
Pass to return no more.

If one would know the poet's personal thought and feeling for Christ he must read "Credo." While one reads it is well to remember that Mr. Gilder does not write mechanically, nor always for publication. As has been elsewhere said, poetry is the manner in which he expresses his thoughts and convictions. "Credo" was thus written. Indeed, for considerable time it was withheld from publication as being something too intimate and personal for the public eye. We may well be thankful that these scruples were overcome, and that the poem is now a public possession. It is a fit vehicle for the expression of many a man's faith and desire:

Christ of Judea, look thou in my heart!
Do I not love thee, look to thee, in thee
Alone have faith of all the sons of men—
Faith deepening with the weight and woe of years.

Pure soul and tenderest of all that came
Into this world of sorrow, hear my prayer:

Lead me, yea, lead me deeper into life,
This suffering, human life wherein thou liv'st
And breathest still, and hold'st thy way divine.

'Tis here, O pitying Christ, where thee I seek,
Here where the strife is fiercest; where the sun
Beats down upon the highway thronged with men,
And in the raging mart. Oh! deeper lead
My soul into the living world of souls
Where thou dost move.

But lead me, Man Divine,
Where'er thou will'st, only that I may find
At the long journey's end thy image there,
And grow more like to it.

He hears the wordy conflict concerning the nature of Christ, human or divine; but the "strife of tongues" does not disturb the serenity or the security of his faith. Well he knows that the Christ life is the one supreme and supremely perfect type and example, and that the life lived in unfaltering obedience and fealty and love cannot fail of the everlasting habitations:

But were he man,
And death ends all; then was that tortured death
On Calvary a thing to make the pulse
Of memory quail and stop.

The blackest thought
The human brain may harbor comes that way.
Face that,—face all,—yet lose not hope nor heart!
One perfect moment in the life of love,
One deed wherein the soul unselfed gleams forth,—
These can outmatch all ill, all doubt, all fear,
And through the encompassing burden of the world
Burn swift the spirit's pathway to its God.

And the same firm and sure purpose to accept and follow Christ whatever may be the philosophic

interpretation or the intellectual belief about him is voiced in what is perhaps the best known of these lyrics:

> If Jesus Christ is a man,—
> And only a man,—I say
> That of all mankind I cleave to him,
> And to him will I cleave alway.
>
> If Jesus Christ is a God,—
> And the only God,—I swear
> I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
> The earth, the sea, and the air!
>
> —*The Song of a Heathen.*

If a "Heathen," with his pagan traditions, with his imperfect knowledge, can make such a determination as that, what ought to be the purpose and achievement of those of us who believe that Peter uttered the fundamental and the final confession when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"!

IMMORTALITY

The last section of "The Celestial Passion" deals with Job's question—the question of every earnest and thoughtful soul: "If a man die, shall he live again?" And in dealing with this question the Christian truth of personal immortality is most clearly and beautifully emphasized. I hardly know where one would find in any single poet a better body of verse dealing with this great truth than can be found in these little volumes of

Mr. Gilder's. Take the lyric with which this special series begins; how chaste and noble and inspiring it is in every line!—

Three messengers to me from heaven came
And said: "There is a deathless human soul;—
It is not lost, as is the fiery flame
That dies into the undistinguished whole.
Ah, no; it separate is, distinct as God—
Nor any more than He can it be killed;
Then fearless give thy body to the clod,
For naught can quench the light that once it filled!"

Three messengers—the first was human LOVE;
The second voice came crying in the night
With strange and awful music from above;
None who have heard that voice forget it quite;
BIRTH is it named; the third, O, turn not pale!
'Twas DEATH to the undying soul cried, Hail!

—*The Soul.*

It is not a vague, general, diffused, and impersonal immortality that he believes in, but a life personal, personally recognizable, and recognizing its own identity:

Nor shall they in vast nature be undone
And lost in general life. Each separate heart
Shall live, and find its own, and never die.

And so to him, as indeed to the prophets and seers of every age, death is not an end, it is only a beginning; it is not bondage, but freedom; it is not loneliness, but congenial companionship; it is not cessation of effort, but increased and better

activity. He never moans or complains as Heine does, "O God, how ugly bitter 'tis to die!" nor ever imagines that the future holds no better fate than to "Pine away a blessed nothing in the cold halls of Heaven." Heaven is not cold, but warm with the joy and cheer of love, of fellowship, and of service:

Call me not dead when I, indeed, have gone
Into the company of the everliving
High and most glorious poets! Let thanksgiving
Rather be made. Say: "He at last hath won
Rest and release, converse supreme and wise,
Music and song and light of immortal faces;
To-day, perhaps, wandering in starry places,
. . . and listening still
To chanted hymns that sound from the heavenly hill."

The lovely lyric in which he commemorates the death of Browning (who warned his friends never to say of him that he was dead) is germane to this subject, and is so brief and beautiful, so pure and perfect, so simple and sincere a tribute, that it must not be omitted:

On this day Browning died?
Say, rather: On the tide
That throbs against those glorious palace walls;
That rises—pauses—falls
With melody and myriad-tinted gleams;
On that enchanted tide,
Half real, and half poured from lovely dreams,
A soul of Beauty,—a white, rhythmic flame,—
Passed singing forth into the Eternal Beauty whence
it came.

And where will you find the universal hope expressed with more of reverent reticence, with greater delicacy of expression, with fuller feeling of passionate ardor, than in the closing lines of "The Celestial Passion"?—lines that are in truth a prayer, the outbreathing of the deep yearning for immortality that is, after all, the greatest need, the highest hope, and the most precious possession of the sons and daughters of Almighty God:

O Lord of Light, steep thou our souls in thee!
That when the daylight trembles into shade,
And falls the silence of mortality,
And all is done, we shall not be afraid,
But pass from light to light; from earth's dull gleam
Into the very heart and heaven of our dream.

THE IDEAL IN THE ACTUAL

It has been elsewhere said that Mr. Gilder is not merely a singer, but a worker; not only an idealist, but also one who constantly strives to embody his ideals in the realities of daily life. Many of his lyrics are brief "In Memoriams" of the men who have helped to lift the world to its highest levels and to send it swiftening on the way toward the realization of the Divine "purpose and intent." His latest volume, In the Heights, as its title indicates, is a call to men to live the higher life. Not in selfish isolation or pride of supposed superiority, but by the embodiment of

the finest ideals of manhood in the life of the home, the street, and the shop, is the world to be ennobled. Society, civics, commerce, religion must all be lifted to the heights of unselfish and helpful service. One hears this call sounding out from many of his lyrics, but in none more clearly than in the hymn written and sung at the service held a few years since in memory of Dr. J. L. M. Curry, and eminently in the poem written in memory of John Wesley and read by Mr. Gilder at the Wesley Bicentennial Celebration at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, in June, 1903. Here is an ideal to inspire and hearten all those who truly hope and surely look for the fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven":

> In those clear, piercing, piteous eyes behold
> The very soul that over England flamed!
> Deep, pure, intense; consuming shame and ill;
> Convicting men of sin; making faith live;
> And,—this the mightiest miracle of all,—
> Creating God again in human hearts.
> . . . . . .
> Let not that image fade
> Ever, O God! from out the minds of men,
> Of him thy messenger and stainless priest,
> In a brute, sodden, and unfaithful time,
> Early and late, o'er land and sea, on-driven;
> In youth, in eager manhood, age extreme,—
> Driven on forever, back and forth the world,
> By that divine, omnipotent desire—
> The hunger and the passion for men's souls!
> . . . . . .

Dear God!
Thy servant never knew one selfish hour!
How are we shamed, who look upon a world
Ages afar from that true kingdom preached
Millenniums ago in Palestine!
Send us, again, O Spirit of all Truth!
High messengers of dauntless faith and power
Like him whose memory this day we praise,
We cherish and we praise with burning hearts.
Let kindle, as before, from his bright torch,
Myriads of messengers aflame with thee
To darkest places bearing light divine!

. . . . . .

Increase thy prophets, Lord! Give strength to smite
Shame to the heart of luxury and sloth!
Give them the yearning after human souls
That burned in Wesley's breast! Through them, great God!
Teach poverty it may be rich in thee;
Teach riches the true wealth of thine own Spirit.
To our loved land, Celestial Purity!
Bring back the meaning of those ancient words,—
Not lost but soiled, and darkly disesteemed,—
The ever-sacred names of husband, wife,
And the great name of Love,—whereon is built
The temple of human happiness and hope!
Baptize with holy wrath thy prophets, Lord!
By them purge from us this corruption foul
That seizes on our civic governments,
Crowns the corrupter in the sight of men,
And makes him maker of laws, and honor's source!
Help us, in memory of the sainted dead,
Help us, O Heaven! to frame a nobler state,
In nobler lives rededicate to thee:—
Symbol and part of the large brotherhood
Of man and nations; one in one great love,
True love of God, which is the love of man,
In sacrifice and mutual service shown,

Let kindle, as before, O Heavenly Light!
New messengers of righteousness, and hope,
And courage, for our day! So shall the world
That ever, surely, climbs to thy desire
Grow swifter toward thy purpose and intent.

Amiel, the Genevan mystic, writes: "The ideal is poison unless it be fused with the real, and the real becomes corrupt without the perfume of the ideal." It is to be hoped that the ideal herein sketched, and finding abundant illustration in the work and writings of Mr. Gilder, will also find practical embodiment in the lives of all those who are glad to acknowledge inspiration and motive, not only from Wesley's life and words, but from the life and words of Wesley's Lord and Master—Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, who went about doing good.

EDWIN MARKHAM

Am I my brother's keeper?—*Cain.*

Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.—*Jesus.*

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

When one becomes interested in what a man says he is naturally interested in the man himself. The life story is of value as an aid in interpreting the life work. One cannot talk long with Edwin Markham without being impressed with his intellectual virility. His mind is rich in ideas. The crude material out of which philosophies, poems, paintings, and social passions are fashioned is surely here, and here in abundance. One is not surprised to learn that his is a sturdy ancestry—intellectual and moral. On his father's side the lineage runs back to Colonel William Markham, first cousin and secretary to William Penn, and later acting-governor of Pennsylvania, and closely associated with Lord Baltimore in important territorial matters. The maternal line, through the Winchells, springs out of the best Puritan stock of New and Old England and Holland. Many of the representatives of the family can be traced among the notable figures in Holland, England, and Colonial America.

Our author was born in Oregon, in 1852, whither his pioneer parents had come from the plains of Michigan. His father dying when the

boy was little more than four years old, we find him somewhat later living with his mother in one of the remote and romantic valleys of California. His early companions were his mother, a woman of silent and inflexible character, restrained rather than effusive, and a brother deaf and dumb. Under these circumstances the lad was naturally dependent largely upon himself. His communion must have been for the most part with nature, and with his inner self. The years of mental brooding, while he followed the cattle or folded the sheep, developed depth, originality of thought, and later of theme and its expression. These are the days in his thought the while he sings:

When darkened hours come crowding fast.
A thought—and all the dark is past!
For I am back a boy again,
Knee-deep in heading barley in the Esmeralda glen.

. . . . . .

How often when the brood of care
Would hold me in a hopeless snare,
My soul springs wingèd and away,
Remembering that wild ducks nest above Benicia bay!

Or when night finds me toiling still,
I am back again on the greening hill,
A shepherd boy at set of sun,
Folding his happy sheep and knowing all his tasks are done.
—*The Heart's Return.*

His gift of song is partly an inheritance, for his mother was a constant reader of Byron and Moore, and was the local poetess of the neighborhood in

which she lived. Her verses were frequently found in the papers of that region and time. The first money that the boy earned was twenty-five dollars for plowing a neighbor's field; and it is significant of the mother's sense of justice that though the money was much needed in the home, yet when starting for town one day she told the boy that the money was his, and that he could have whatever he wished to buy with it. And it is surely significant of the trend of the boy's thought that at that early age (about fifteen or sixteen) his asking was for Webster's Unabridged Dictionary and the poems of Tennyson, Bryant, and Moore! It is not difficult to imagine the use to which he put these precious volumes in the leisure that was his in the peaceful and sunny Suisun Valley where he cared for the flocks and herds. He had only slight chance for technical schooling—about three months in the year, and not always that—but he read and studied diligently, and made the best use of whatever books came his way. Also he worked and earned and saved in such various ways as an ambitious boy always can find, until at eighteen he entered the State Normal School at San José, and later finished his school work at Christian College, Santa Rosa, California. Believing also in the value of handicraft, he mastered the secrets of blacksmithing and wrought at

the forge with conscientious zeal. But men of intellectual vigor and fair training were not so plentiful in California that he could be permitted to remain at the forge. The University of California realized his worth and placed him in charge of the Tompkins Observation School of Oakland, where he remained till his relinquishment of technical teaching for service in the higher school of literature. In this brief note one other trait of Edwin Markham should be mentioned. His friend and neighbor Joaquin Miller expresses it when he says: "Markham has always seemed to me the purest of the pure; the cleanest-minded man of all the many great and good of his high calling I have known, and it has been my high privilege to know well nearly all of the great authors of Saxon lands of this last third of a century." The present writer makes no claim of wide acquaintance with authors, and hence is not competent to institute comparisons; but he does bear glad and joyous witness to the truth of Miller's words as to the impression made upon him by contact and conversation with Mr. Markham. His ideals are high, his thoughts clean and inspirational, his speech chaste, touched with the fire of prophecy, and filled with faith and hope and love! His is essentially a religious nature, and to him religion surely implies chastity and solidarity—purity of

thought and life united with brotherliness of spirit and deed. To use his own language, "The race needs to be inbrothered, earth imparadised, everything in relation to sex must be lifted to touch the ideal and the poetic. The earth is to be redeemed through the realization of this ideal of sex and solidarity." Mr. Markham has written much on social and religious topics for the magazines. Among the more important may be mentioned, "Poetry the Soul of Religion," and "Religion as the Art of Life," in the Homiletic Review, together with "The Poetry of Jesus" in a recent issue of the Cosmopolitan. Of course, his chief claim to recognition is found in the poems gathered in the two volumes, The Man with the Hoe, and Other Poems (Doubleday & McClure Co.); Lincoln, and Other Poems (McClure, Phillips & Co.); and a third volume of verse now about to be published (1906). In the summer time he lives quietly at Landing, New Jersey, and in the winter months makes his home—close to the great city—in Westerleigh, Staten Island.

MARKHAM'S MESSAGE

AN INTERPRETATION

I

To Edwin Markham poetry is not a byplay, not the recreation of an idle hour. It is not offered as an easy substitute for thought, something that one may read merely for the pleasure of the rhyme, or to satisfy a soft and sensuous sentimentality. Poetry to him is a vocation, a high and heavenly calling, the fit vehicle for the expression of the truth that will not be silent. As Paul cried, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel," so this man hears the command that pushes him along his appointed way. To fail is to be recreant to the deepest convictions of his soul. His it is to speak whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. That he realizes the urge of his mission, and that to him it is a duty that may not be shirked without meriting the coward's fate, is evident in his description of "The Poet":

> His home is in the heights: to him
> Men wage a battle weird and dim,
> Life is a mission stern as fate,
> And Song a dread apostolate.
> The toils of prophecy are his,
> To hail the coming centuries—
> To ease the steps and lift the load
> Of souls that falter on the road.
>
> . . . .

He presses on before the race,
And sings out of a silent place.
Like faint notes of a forest bird
On heights afar that voice is heard;
And the dim path he breaks to-day
Will some time be a trodden way.

. . . . . .

O men of earth, that wandering voice
Still goes the upward way: rejoice!

Poetry to him is not only a high and serious vocation; it takes on somewhat of the nature of revelation. He is not more poet than prophet. Something of the inspiration and authority of the prophets of truth and righteousness he would claim, I fancy, for himself. The life-giving quality of moments of vision, the swift and sure deduction from some inspirational glimpse into the heart of things—all this he realizes and holds. One cannot read "The Whirlwind Road" without being reminded of Paul's experience in the third heaven, where he heard things that could not be uttered in human speech. So our poet, in moments of inspiration, and on the Mounts of Vision, sees and feels truths and ideals that at best can only be shadowed forth and suggested in human song and speech:

The Muses wrapped in mysteries of light
Came in a rush of music on the night;
And I was lifted wildly on quick wings,
And borne away into the deep of things.
The dead doors of my being broke apart;
A wind of rapture blew across the heart;

The inward song of worlds rang still and clear;
I felt the Mystery the Muses fear;
Yet they went swiftening on the ways untrod,
And hurled me breathless at the feet of God.

I felt faint touches of the Final Truth—
Moments of trembling love, moments of youth.
A vision swept away the human wall;
Slowly I saw the meaning of it all—
Meaning of life and time and death and birth,
But cannot tell it to the men of Earth.

And how beautifully does he illustrate and illume the same thought in these simple and musical lines!—

She comes like the hush and beauty of the night,
And sees too deep for laughter;
Her touch is a vibration and a light
From worlds before and after.

—*Poetry.*

And then again, how vigorously and vitally does he conceive the poet's mission! Here is no mystical muse singing of the joy of quiet and rest, of the virtue of meditation and inaction in monastery and cell, but instead the clear voice and the bugle call of a twentieth century knight of labor and toil; one whose business and mission it is to inspire men to ideals and deeds of noble and heroic sacrifice and service: his mission, that of the bard or skald of ancient times who sang the glory and strength of the fathers for the inspiration and strengthening of the sons; of the bugler of

to-day who on the field of fight by his clarion note nerves the soldiery for the onset and charge of victory:

> O Poet, thou art holden with a vow:
> The light of higher worlds is on thy brow,
> And Freedom's star is soaring in thy breast.
> Go, be a dauntless voice, a bugle-cry
> In darkening battle when the winds are high—
> A clear sane cry wherein the God is heard
> To speak to men the one redeeming word.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Let trifling pipe be mute,
> Fling by the languid lute:
> Take down the trumpet and confront the Hour,
> And speak to toil-worn nations from a tower—
> Take down the horn wherein the thunders sleep,
> Blow battles into men—call down the fire—
> The daring, the long purpose, the desire;
> Descend with faith into the Human Deep,
> And ringing to the troops of right a cheer,
> Make known the Truth of Man in holy fear;
> Send forth thy spirit in a storm of song,
> A tempest flinging fire upon the wrong.
>
> —*To High-born Poets.*

And as for the outcome of his song, that too must be practical and find its fulfillment as it is embodied in individual life and in the social order. It will not content this singer that his readers shall be touched to sentimentality, so that they will speak sweet and honeyed praises for his message, and then go their ways all unheeding its deeper import and purpose. He is not willing that either he or his message shall simply be conceived "as a

very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." He knows full well that the value of his song is in proportion to its incarnation in thought and life. Just as God's richest and finest thought comes to fruition in the Word made flesh, so our poet realizes that it is the Song forceful and fruitful in speech and deed that has power and efficacy. All this is clearly and strongly set forth in his "Song Made Flesh":

I have no glory in these songs of mine:
If one of them can make a brother strong,
It came down from the peaks of the divine—
I heard it in the Heaven of Lyric Song.

The one who builds the poem into fact,
He is the rightful owner of it all:
The pale words are with God's own power packed
When brave souls answer to their bugle-call.

And so I ask no man to praise my song,
But I would have him build it in his soul;
For that great praise would make me glad and strong,
And build the poem to a perfect whole.

II

When we come to a consideration of the message of Markham, when we ask, what is his special and central contribution to the thought of

to-day? the answer is not difficult. He is the poet of humanity—of man in relations. Always in his thought is the consciousness of the social bond that binds, or ought to bind, men into associations and organizations for common weal. His muse is tuned to the key of social brotherhood. It is one theme, with many and delightful and suggestive combinations and variations. Just as the musician combines and unites the simple notes of the octave into the complexities and harmonies of oratorio and symphony, so the poet weaves out of this simple theme the harmony and symphony of life. And this must not be taken as depreciation, for even the greatest and most influential singers and thinkers have their one central theme. And it is only as we understand that, that we have the key and clue to the meaning of their singing and speaking. Stopford Brooke says of Browning: "When Paracelsus was published in 1835 Browning had fully thought out, and in that poem fully expressed, his theory of God's relation to man, and of man's relation to the universe around him, to his fellow men, and to the world beyond. . . . Roughly sketched in Pauline, fully rounded in Paracelsus, it held and satisfied his mind till the day of his death." And he adds that Browning escapes monotony "by the immense variety of the subjects he chooses, and

of the scenery in which he places them"[1]—in other words, singleness of theme with variety of treatment. The myriad-minded men are few. Indeed, the day of cyclopedic information is gone. The world is too vast, the subjects too many, for the individual to grasp and hold. So we live in the age of specialization. In physics, mechanics, literature, and art men set themselves to the doing of one thing. And it must not be forgotten that the man who would do one thing well must of necessity know many things with precision and clearness. The most many-sided man of his day was Paul, but he never lost sight of his objective. "This one thing I do" was ever present in his thought and efficient in his effort. He toiled and traveled, he suffered and endured, he wrote and spoke, but always with one clear outstanding purpose—the exaltation and depiction of Christ as Redeemer and Lord. So Markham sings in various keys, treats divers subjects, but always keeps his main theme—the Social Man—in view.

Nature for him adumbrates, suggests, and illustrates this truth. Religion is interpreted as a social bond. Divine Fatherhood is the ground and seal of human brotherhood. The will of God is the will of the social welfare of the holy brotherhood. Government—municipal, state, and

[1]The Poetry of Robert Browning, pp. 15, 16.

national—is for the uplift and betterment, for the closer joining in fellowship and service, of the units that now too frequently struggle, and fight, and fail, being alone. How clear this is may be seen in "Brotherhood," a poem that undoubtedly goes to the heart of his message:

> The crest and crowning of all good,
> Life's final star, is Brotherhood;
> For it will bring again to Earth
> Her long-lost Poesy and Mirth;
> Will send new light on every face,
> A kingly power upon the race.
> And till it come, we men are slaves,
> And travel downward to the dust of graves.
>
> Come, clear the way, then, clear the way:
> Blind creeds and kings have had their day.
> Break the dead branches from the path:
> Our hope is in the aftermath—
> Our hope is in heroic men,
> Star-led to build the world again.
> To this Event the ages ran:
> Make way for Brotherhood—make way for Man.

In Markham the sense of humanity, of the worth and dignity of the individual—first heralded in the gospels, then dropping out of sight, coming into view again in the French Revolution and in the passionate outbursts of Shelley and his compeers, finding fit phrasing in Burns's melodious verse, voicing its hope in Tennyson's "Golden Year" and "Locksley Hall"—comes into full view and has ample range and play. Without

doubt he is endeavoring to hasten the day foreseen by Burns when he sang:

> Then let us pray that come it may,
> As come it will for a' that,
> That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth
> May bear the gree, and a' that,
> For a' that, and a' that,
> It's coming yet, for a' that,
> That man to man, the warld o'er,
> Shall brothers be for a' that.

Anxious he is to have something to do with the quick inbringing of the time foretold by Tennyson:

> When wealth no more shall rest in mounded heaps,
> But smit with freer light shall slowly melt
> In many streams to fatten lower lands,
> And light shall spread, and man be liker man
> Thro' all the season of the golden year.

III

In his portrayal of the social bond, in his call to a brotherly kindness and helpfulness that shall be real, organic, and universal, he becomes of necessity the poet of the spiritual and ideal, as against the material and the merely utilitarian conception of life. When men conceive material possessions as the highest good, when every man is striving for position and power, when acquisition is uppermost in every thought and most evident in endeavor—then men are in the fires of fiercest and bitterest competition; then selfish greed and passion have the mastery, and men are asking in the spirit and

speech of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Markham holds that the way out is the spiritual interpretation of the world, and its organization in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. He is no singer of a brotherhood that rests in the materialistic conception of life. "The Muse of Brotherhood" declares this truth:

> I am in the Expectancy that runs:
> My feet are in the Future, whirled afar
> On wings of light. If I have any sons,
> Let them arise and follow to my star.
> . . . . .
> And at the first break of my Social Song
> A hush will fall upon the foolish strife,
> As though a joyous god, serene and strong,
> Shined suddenly before the steps of life.
>
> Cold hearts that falter are my only bar:
> Heroes that seek my ever-fading goal
> Must take their reckoning from the central star,
> And follow the equator: I am Soul.

In the thought of our author, brotherhood is the outspring of spirituality—the deep truth latent at the heart of the gospel—so that he does not hesitate to make his "Muse of Brotherhood" say:

> I am Religion by her deeper name.

The same truth is taught in "The Mighty Hundred Years." In these man has come to self-knowledge and self-revelation as never before. With all that has been gained he is ready for new conquests and adventures. But the higher fields

of knowledge, the finer adventures of the future, lie in the realm of the immaterial and spiritual:

> It is the hour of man: new Purposes,
> Broad-shouldered, press against the world's slow gate;
> And voices from the vast eternities
> Still preach the soul's austere apostolate.
>
> Always there will be vision for the heart,
> The press of endless passion: every goal
> A traveler's tavern, whence he must depart
> On new divine adventures of the soul.

So too in "The World-Purpose." Men are saying that the pursuit of the ideal and the spiritual is in vain. It is all a vague and foolish dream. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. It is the cry of the materialist and pessimist of every age. It is heard especially to-day in this age of stupendous material power, of forces well-nigh inconceivable, and of wealth hitherto unimaginable. Against all this the poet lifts his passionate protest. The Spiritual Power is not sleeping or dead. It still keeps watch and ward. As Lowell saw the triumph of truth through the presence of the Eternal God "keeping watch above his own," so Markham sees, and speaks his faith in ringing words of hope and cheer:

> All that we glory in was once a dream;
> The World-Will marches onward, gleam by gleam.
> New voices speak, dead paths begin to stir:
> Man is emerging from the sepulcher!
> Let no man dare, let no man ever dare
> To mark on Time's great way, "No Thoroughfare!"

And perhaps best embodiment of all in this respect is his call "To Young America"—this nation so signally favored, so highly prospered, endowed with a wealth of crude material and native resource that cannot be computed or estimated, just emerging as a world-force, as a factor in the mighty movements of modern life! Realizing perhaps for the first time the greatness of her opportunity, the richness of her privilege; tempted as mayhap no nation has ever been to worship the god of Mammon, to believe that man lives by bread and bread only, how true and timely the vision and the message of this singer of to-day!—

> In spite of the stare of the wise and the world's derision,
> Dare travel the star-blazed road, dare follow the Vision.
>
> It breaks as a hush on the soul in the wonder of youth;
> And the lyrical dream of the boy is the kingly truth.
>
> The world is a vapor, and only the Vision is real—
> Yea, nothing can hold against Hell but the Wingèd Ideal.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT ILLUSTRATED

I

CONCEPTION OF LIFE

THAT Markham's thought and writing is deeply influenced by the Christian conception of life is not to be doubted. He deals with the average man, the man of the shops and streets, the villages and farms—the artisans and laborers of every age and class. Note some of his more important titles: "The Man with the Hoe," "The Sower," "The Toilers," "The Rock-Breaker," "The Man Under the Stone," "The Angelus." And indeed, whatever may be his text or title, his theme is always the same: the people—their woes and needs, their nature and possibilities, their yearnings, hopes, and fears. The inspiration of it all is the gospel. The common man comes to himself in the gospel of Christ. Christ is in truth the incarnation of the artisan's possibility and hope:

> This is the gospel of labor—ring it, ye bells of the kirk—
> The Lord of Love came down from above to live with the men who work.
>
> —*Van Dyke.*

It was to simple and humble shepherds that the tidings of great joy for all people was first revealed.

Christ was born of a peasant woman, and worked as a carpenter among the fellows of his class. When he began his public ministry his first utterance showed that the common man was in his thought—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." When he chose his special companions who were to learn his thought and interpret his purpose to the world they were of the laborers and toilers. It was among such that he lived and labored, opening blind eyes, vitalizing lame limbs, and quickening dumb tongues. To such as these his call sounded out, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." No wonder that the common people heard him gladly; no wonder that the sense of humanity suffuses the gospel; no wonder that Edwin Markham, this poet of humanity, is drenched with the dew of gospel grace, and that his listening shepherds sing:

> Haste, O people: all are bidden—
> Haste from places, high or hidden:
> In Mary's Child the Kingdom comes, the heaven in beauty bends!

He has made all life completer:
He has made the Plain Way sweeter,
For the stall is His first shelter and the cattle His first friends.

He has come! the skies are telling:
He has quit the glorious dwelling;
And first the tidings came to us, the humble shepherd folk.
He has come to field and manger,
And no more is God a Stranger:
He comes as Common Man at home with cart and crookèd yoke.

As the shadow of a cedar
To a traveler in gray Kedar
Will be the kingdom of His love, the kingdom without end.
Tongues and ages may disclaim Him,
Yet the Heaven of heavens will name Him
Lord of peoples, Light of nations, elder Brother, tender Friend.

—*The Song of the Shepherds.*

II

DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The dignity and value of the individual is one of the evident principles of Christ. A single soul outvalues the material universe. A little child, with his innocence and unselfishness, is a fitter type of the spiritual kingdom than men and women sitting in places of power and surrounded with earthly accumulations and honors. The Master always seemed to care more for an individual than for a great crowd. The final truth with respect to worship (that some one has said is to be the foundation of the universal religion) he revealed

to an unknown and sin-soiled Samaritan. The method of entrance into the kingdom, the secret of spiritual birth and beginning, he taught to a single questioner in the silence and secrecy of the night. The most precious and priceless teaching of the centuries he dropped casually, and seemingly carelessly, to a few friends as they walked in the roadways, or chatted in the Bethany home, or feasted at some hospitable table. And all this because he believed in the supreme value of personality, and knew that the secret of abiding influence and power was to get his truth enshrined and embodied in some vital, enriched, and developed individual. The influence of this is seen in our poet. He has caught the teaching of the Master, and man is of value to him not because of what he has, nor yet because of the position he occupies, but by virtue of what he really is. What suggestions of dignity, what shadowings forth of infinite privilege and destiny, in this mystical stanza!—

> Out of the deep and endless universe
> There came a greater Mystery, a Shape,
> A Something sad, inscrutable, august—
> One to confront the worlds and question them.
> —*Man.*

And something of the same truth is seen in "The Tragedy." How busy we are with the concerns of the daily and the material, how occupied with the things that pertain to the present and the pass-

ing. And how little concerned we are with the realities of life, with those deeper powers and possibilities that truly mark and make us Man. Matthew Arnold has the truth when he sings:

> We see all sights from pole to pole,
> We glance, and nod, and bustle by;
> And never once possess our soul
> Before we die.

And this is indeed the tragedy and pathos of life—the failure of man, or his inability, to see and appreciate the dignity, the beauty, and the grandeur of the place he holds in the universe of God. And all this our author suggests when he writes:

> Oh, the fret of the brain,
> And the wounds and the worry;
> Oh, the thought of love and the thought of death—
> And the soul in its silent hurry.
>
> But the stars break above,
> And the fields flower under;
> And the tragical life of man goes on,
> Surrounded by beauty and wonder.

It is, however, in "The Sower" and in "The Angelus" that we have his definite portrayal of the worth of the peasant to the world's life. In the former he has been looking at Millet's painting, and the suggestion in it touches his brooding thought. He thinks of this Sower as the type of his class; he sees how dependent the world of fashion, wealth, and power is upon this disregarded and disesteemed tiller of the soil. And as the

vision brightens there glows and greatens about that homely figure the glory and dignity of personality, and the elemental import of the simple toil of simple and hardy folk:

Who is it coming on the slant brown slope,
Touched by the twilight and her mournful hope—
Coming with hero step, with rhythmic swing,
Where all the bodily motions weave and sing?
The grief of the ground is in him, yet the power
Of Earth to hide the furrow with the flower.

He is the stone rejected, yet the stone
Whereon is built metropolis and throne.
Out of his toil come all their pompous shows,
Their purple luxury and plush repose!
The grime of this bruised hand keeps tender white
The hands that never labor, day nor night.
His feet that only know the field's rough floors
Send lordly steps down echoing corridors.

Yea, this vicarious toiler at the plow
Gives that fine pallor to my lady's brow.
And idle armies with their boom and blare,
Flinging their foolish glory on the air—
He hides their nakedness, he gives them bed,
And by his alms their hungry mouths are fed.

"The Angelus" suggests to him the unity of worship and of work. He holds the truth that work rightly done is worship, and that if a man has the right spirit all his life is an offering to God. As one of our hymns states:

Work shall be prayer, if all be wrought
As thou wouldst have it done;
And prayer, by thee inspired and taught,
Itself with work be one. —*John Ellerton.*

The bowing peasants with reverent thought and worshipful attitude remind him of George Herbert's words, quaint and true:

> Teach me, my God and King,
> In all things thee to see,
> And what I do in anything,
> To do it as for thee.
>
> . . . . .
>
> A servant with this clause
> Makes drudgery divine:
> Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
> Makes that and th' action fine.
>
> This is the famous stone
> That turneth all to gold:
> For that which God doth touch and own
> Cannot for less be told. —*The Elixir*.

And so he portrays this commonalty and community of labor and of prayer, depicting the sacramental nature of life's daily task, and showing that the uplifting of the day's work, as an offering to God, sanctifies the gift and the giver and suffuses the gift with the sweet incense of the morning and the evening sacrifice:

> Pausing to let the hush of evening pass
> Across the soul, as shadow over grass,
> They cease their day-long sacrament of toil,
> That living prayer, the tilling of the soil!
> And richer are their twofold worshipings
> Than flare of pontiff or the pomp of kings.
> For each true deed is worship: it is prayer,
> And carries its own answer unaware.
> Yes, they whose feet upon good errands run
> Are friends of God, with Michael of the sun;
> Yes, each accomplished service of the day
> Paves for the feet of God a lordlier way.
>
> . . . . . .

He is more pleased by some sweet human use
Than by the learnèd book of the recluse;
Sweeter are comrade kindnesses to Him
Than the high harpings of the Seraphim;
More than white incense circling to the dome
Is a field well furrowed or a nail sent home.
More than the hallelujahs of the choirs,
Or hushed adorings at the altar fires,
Is a loaf well kneaded, or a room swept clean,
With light-heart love that finds no labor mean.

III

SYMPATHY

One of the characteristic notes of Markham's song is his sympathy for the burden bearers and toilers. The men in the field who do the hard, foundation work that is too often unrecognized and but poorly requited; the women who stitch and sometimes are stunted and starved in body and soul by pinching poverty and meager opportunity—these are ever in his thought. And coördinating with this truth is his vision of selfish greed, the grinding hand of power and place laid upon the poor and the lowly; all the hatred, injustice, and unbrotherliness of men—sometimes purposeful and conscious, and at other times simply the fruitage of an imperfect social and civic state that makes men its unconscious instruments. Visions such as these constantly swim in his ken and move him to champion the cause of the toiler, while at the same time he reveals the gross injustice

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and the deep injury done to individuals and society by the long tolerance of imperfect and baneful social, civic, and industrial ideals. The outworking of sin in its manifold forms of selfish indifference, greed, unbrotherliness, and injustice is clearly seen. He knows that behind all the inequities and iniquities of the social and civic state is the dark shadow of sin, individual and social. The joylessness and the hopelessness, the mute despair of the multitudes are all due to the inworking principle of sin, whose fruitage is seen in the varied forms of life and experience. Where there is no sin labor is in itself a source of joy and happiness instead of being, as so often it is among men, a cause of misery and wretchedness. Two little poems of his reveal this truth clearly. In the one he notes the coöperation and happy toil of ants, the equal labor and reward, and contrasts it with the plot and scheme of man to use his brother for his own selfish greed and gain:

Little ants in leafy wood,
Bound by gentle Brotherhood,
. . . . .
Ye are fraters in your hall,
Gay and chainless, great and small;
All are toilers in the field,
All are sharers in the yield.
But we mortals plot and plan
How to grind the fellow man;
Glad to find him in a pit,
If we get some gain of it.

So with us, the sons of Time,
Labor is a kind of crime,
For the toilers have the least,
While the idlers lord the feast.
Yes, our workers they are bound,
Pallid captives to the ground;
Jeered by traitors, fooled by knaves,
Till they stumble into graves.

How appears to tiny eyes
All this wisdom of the wise?
—*Little Brothers of the Ground.*

In the other he sees the birds at work building their nests, he hears their joyous bursts of full-throated song; and as these little tenants of the tree-tops busily build and gayly sing, filling the air with their delicious music, he knows that the purpose of God for bird and man is joy and peace. But as he turns to human builders he finds no such jocund mood; no such delight in labor as gladdens and lightens the toil of the bird:

I dwell near a murmur of leaves,
And my labor is sweeter than rest;
For over my head in the shade of the eaves
A throstle is building his nest.

And he teaches me gospels of joy,
As he gurgles and shouts in his toil:
It is brimming with rapture, his wild employ,
Bearing a straw for spoil.

So I know 'twas a joyous God
Who stretched out the splendor of things,
And gave to my bird the cool green sod,
A sky, and a venture of wings.

But why are my brothers so still?
They are building a lordly hall--
They are building a palace there on the hill,
But there's never a song in it all!
—*The Builders.*

How it reminds one of the sentiment of Matthew Arnold, who also saw the sadness and the bitter hopelessness of many of the world's workers when he said:

For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where, in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning task-work give,
Dreaming of naught beyond their prison-wall.
—*A Summer Night.*

The way in which men under the power and sway of selfishness, which in our author's concept is the very heart and center of sin, oppress and grind their fellows, using them remorselessly for their own ends and then flinging them aside as thoughtlessly and as ruthlessly as they would fling away an outworn tool, is clearly seen and unflinchingly portrayed. In "The Toilers" we see them drudging in the pastures and furrows, not much better in their own thought than the beasts of the field, and surely not more regarded in the estimate of their employers:

The leaves shower down and are sport for the winds that come after;
And so are the Toilers in all lands the jest and the laughter
Of nobles—the Toilers scourged on in the furrow as cattle,
Or flung as a meat to the cannons that hunger in battle.

And when one notes what has but just now happened in Russia, the pitiable case of the peasantry and the artisans in that great land—indeed, of all who are not of the nobility and the privileged classes—he feels that these words are none too strong. Similarly in "A Harvest Song," the reapers and harvesters are necessary adjuncts in the saving of the grain, but they are of small consequence in the thought of the great nobles and landlords who hold the broad acres, and care little or nothing for their less favored fellows:

Lo, they had bread while they were out a-toiling in the sun:
Now they are strolling beggars, for the harvest work is done.
They are the gods of husbandry: they gather in the sheaves,
But when the autumn strips the wood, they're drifting with
the leaves.

But Markham well knows that all the evil of this state is not visited on the men who toil and moil in heat and cold. The selfish, cruel, and unbrotherly man receives an arrow in his own life that poisons the spring of true enjoyment. "The Goblin Laugh" reveals the powerlessness of this way of life to satisfy, and hauntingly suggests the tantalizing and ever-failing search of the unbrotherly after the deep joy and peace of life:

When I behold how men and women grind
And grovel for some place of pomp or power,
To shine and circle through a crumbling hour,
Forgetting the large mansions of the mind,

That are the rest and shelter of mankind;
And when I see them come with wearied brains
Pallid and powerless to enjoy their gains,
I seem to hear a goblin laugh unwind.

And even deeper than this failure to attain is the certainty of an Eternal Power keeping watch and ward, "One that remembers, reckons, and repays." This man of greed and cruelty may not hope to escape the consequence of his sin. The reward of sin is not more clearly certified in the gospels than in the suggestions and statements of many of these poems. In the second part of "Dreyfus" one sees this truth outstanding clear and bright:

Oh, import deep as life is, deep as time!
There is a Something sacred and sublime,
Moving behind the worlds, beyond our ken,
Weighing the stars, weighing the deeds of men.

Take heart, O soul of sorrow, and be strong:
There is One greater than the whole world's wrong.
Be hushed before the high benignant Power
That goes untarrying to the reckoning hour.

O men that forge the fetter, it is vain:
There is a Still Hand stronger than your chain.
'Tis no avail to bargain, sneer, and nod,
And shrug the shoulder for reply to God.

In view of all this it is surely not to be wondered at that the poet's sympathy is deeply stirred for those whose sad lot he so vividly conceives and so clearly portrays. This note of sympathy is struck in many of his writings. Indeed, often when it is not specifically heard it is the deep and suggestive undertone. But one does not have to read much

in Markham, nor search long, before he comes to the direct and earnest expression of this genuine brotherly interest and sympathy. In that poem that perhaps first of all brought him into public notice and gave him fame, "The Man with the Hoe," it speaks in no uncertain tone. Written as this was after seeing Millet's picture, and with the word of Scripture, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him," as a text and foundation thought, it throbs and beats in every line with a deep human sympathy for the man who through carelessness and cruelty, by adversity and environment, had not been able to realize Tennyson's ideal and

> Arise and fly
> The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
> Move upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die.

How the heart of the poet glows and gleams in his passionate questions and deductions!—

> Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
> To have dominion over sea and land;
> To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;
> To feel the passion of Eternity?
> Is this the Dream He dreamed who shaped the suns
> And pillared the blue firmament with light?
> Down all the stretch of Hell to its last gulf
> There is no shape more terrible than this—
> More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed—
> More filled with signs and portents for the soul—
> More fraught with menace to the universe.
> . . . . . .

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
Is this the handiwork you give to God,
This monstrous thing distorted and soul-quenched?
How will you ever straighten up this shape;
Touch it again with immortality;
Give back the upward looking and the light;
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;
Make right the immemorial infamies,
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes?

. . . . . .

How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—
With those who shaped him to the thing he is—
When this dumb Terror shall reply to God,
After the silence of the centuries?

And what a sympathetic picture is that he draws in "The Man Under the Stone"!—the workingman with wife and children needing food and clothing, and he himself toiling early and late, day after day, for a mere pittance. Suppose work slackens, suppose sickness comes as it almost always does come, suppose accident befalls this man on whom so much depends! We know the result; he seems just getting ahead, just about to push the great stone to the summit, when one or other of those calamities happens, and it is the labor of Sisyphus over again. "The destruction of the poor is their poverty." So the Bible says, so it is, and so Markham sees and sings:

When I see a workingman with mouths to feed,
Up, day after day, in the dark before the dawn,
And coming home, night after night, through the dusk,

Swinging forward like some fierce silent animal,
I see a man doomed to roll a huge stone up an endless steep.
He strains it onward inch by stubborn inch,
Crouched always in the shadow of the rock. . . .
See where he crouches, twisted, cramped, misshapen!
He lifts for their life;
The veins knot and darken—
Blood surges into his face. . . .
Now he loses—now he wins—
Now he loses—loses—(God of my soul!)
He digs his feet into the earth—
There's a moment of terrified effort. . .
Will the huge stone break his hold,
And crush him as it plunges to the gulf?

The silent struggle goes on and on,
Like two contending in a dream.

And our poet never forgets. He is singing "A Lyric of the Dawn"; you are out with him in the woodland ways and the dewy dells. You walk the meadows and joy in the golden light of the sun; you see all the wonder and beauty of the world life, the music of the murmuring river, the deep sound of the surf as it breaks on the shore, the laughter of the wind, the scent of the dewy grass, the song of the thrush! And you are so enchained and enchanted, so delighted and intoxicated with the beauty and delight of it all, that you forget all about the bitterness and sorrow of human life. Not so the poet—he sees, and hears, and enjoys all that you do, but he forgets not the men in the valley of despondency, and the morning song of the bird kindles in him a sympathetic desire that a like joy may somehow

come into the hearts and lives of his distressed and wearied fellow workers:

> Carol, my king,
> On your bough aswing!
> Thou art not of these evil days—
> Thou art a voice of the world's lost youth:
> Oh, tell me what is duty—what is truth—
> How to find God upon these hungry ways;
> Tell of the golden prime,
> When men beheld swift deities descend,
> Before the race was left alone with Time,
> Homesick on Earth, and homeless to the end,
> When bird and beast could make a man their friend.
> . . . . . .
> Sing of the wonders of their woodland ways,
> Before the weird earth-hunger of these days,
> When there was rippling mirth,
> When justice was on Earth,
> And light and grandeur of the Golden Age;
> When never a heart was sad,
> When all from king to herdsman had
> A penny for a wage.
> Ah, that old time has faded to a dream—
> The moon's fair face is broken in the stream;
> Yet shout and carol on, O bird, and let
> The exiled race not utterly forget;
> Publish thy revelation on the lawns—
> Sing ever in the dark ethereal dawns;
> Sometime, in some sweet year,
> These stormy souls, these men of Earth may hear.

This deep and tender feeling is the underlying inspiration of two or three other beautifully suggestive songs. It is the ground swell that bears them to their bourn. It sobs in the final question of "A Cry in the Night," and it ever haunts as a

ghost the dim and yellow page of the "Devil's Jest-Book," from which he transcribes a leaf that we may hear a ghostly voice tell in a weirdly way the fate of mistress and maiden, high-born lady and lowly and lonely sempstress:

> And so this glimmering life at last recedes
> In unknown, endless depths beyond recall;
> And what's the worth of all our ancient creeds,
> If here at the end of ages this is all—
> A white face floating in the whirling ball,
> A dead face plashing in the river reeds?
> —*A Leaf from the Devil's Jest-Book.*

And it is the same feeling, true and noble, that finds expression in his song, "On the Gulf of Night." It is suffused with a passionate pity and yearning brotherliness for the storm-shaken, tempest-tossed, and ever-wandering petrels on the yeasting sea of social life—the men and women who find no resting place for their feet, though they seek it with earnestness and tears:

> The world's sad petrels dwell for evermore
> On windy headland or on ocean floor.
> . . . . . .
> There is for them not anything before,
> But sound of sea and sight of soundless shore
> Save when the darkness glimmers with a ray,
> And Hope sings softly, *Soon it will be day.*
> Then for a golden space the shades are thinned
> And dawn seems blowing seaward on the wind.
>
> But soon the dark comes wilder than before,
> And swift around them breaks a sullen roar;
> The tempest calls to windward and to lee,
> And—they are seabirds on the homeless sea.

And surely we do not mistake when we interpret the exquisite little gem entitled "A Prayer" as the outgushing of this deep and pure well of human sympathy. It is evident that the meaning and purpose of all that he may gain from communion and fellowship with the Divine Father is that some way he may use it for his fellows, that somehow he and his work may be as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," as a spring of water in the dry and thirsty ground:

> Teach me, Father, how to go
> Softly as the grasses grow;
> Hush my soul to meet the shock
> Of the wild world as a rock;
> But my spirit, propt with power,
> Make as simple as a flower.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Teach me, Father, how to be
> Kind and patient as a tree.
> Joyfully the crickets croon
> Under shady oak at noon;
> Beetle, on his mission bent,
> Tarries in that cooling tent.
> Let me, also, cheer a spot,
> Hidden field or garden grot—
> Place where passing souls can rest
> On the way and be their best.

Now, surely it is not difficult to see in all this the influence of Christian thought. Christianity is a sympathetic religion, and if its representatives have not always fully and fairly embodied this ele-

ment, the great Founder never failed. How often is it said of him that he had compassion on the multitudes! He saw them scattered as sheep without a shepherd, he heard their cry in the wilderness. He saw them the prey of the spoiler (ecclesiastical and political), and always his heart was touched to tenderness, his hand outstretched in helpfulness, and his lips moved to the music of gracious, comforting, and healing speech. It is to him that Markham goes for his interpretation of religion and the religious life. Back of all forms and faiths he touches the object of all true faith, and the living virtue of that touch abides, and is the continuing inspiration of his sympathetic and brotherly singing.

IV

FRATERNITY

And the influence of Christian thought is seen again in the way in which a true brotherhood is set forth, as the alleviation and cure of all these social ills and sufferings. That the Christian doctrine of Brotherhood, as suggested and unfolded in New Testament practice, has taken firm hold of the poet's mind cannot be doubted. To the question of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Markham makes answer, "We are born for the practice of the Golden Rule."

Christ's doctrine of neighborliness as taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan is a chief element in Markham's teaching concerning brotherliness. It is not the man in your social set, or in your business vocation, or your political party, or your religious creed that is alone your brother. The veriest outcast, the man perhaps at the farthest remove from you socially, industrially, and religiously, has none the less a brother's claim on you. And this is over again the New Testament teaching and the New Testament practice with its deep and broad implications. His business as a poet—indeed, the business of every poet and prophet worthy the name, and of all earnest and serious thinkers and livers—is to hasten the era of brotherhood with all its wide implications and bearings as respects society and state. He insists that the practical concern of true religion is to find a material basis for brotherhood. The state now has a working form of selfishness, it must be made to have a working form of love. There is no peace nor rest till this great aim be accomplished:

> No peace for thee, no peace,
> Till blind oppression cease;
> Till the stones cry from the walls,
> Till the gray injustice falls—
> Till strong men come to build in freedom-fate
> The pillars of the new Fraternal State.
>
> —*To High-born Poets.*

History teaches this truth. The hoary ruins of the past prove that the nations forgetful of the duty and privilege of brotherly kindness and helpfulness are forgetful also of the foundation that makes for permanence. It is Lowell who says that "Moral supremacy is the only kind that leaves monuments and not ruins behind it." And moral supremacy is impossible to the nations that build on self and selfish greed. In "The Witness of the Dust" Markham calls the ruins of Babylon and Tyre to testify to the truth of his contention:

Voices are crying from the dust of Tyre,
From Baalbec and the stones of Babylon—
"We raised our pillars upon Self-Desire,
And perished from the large gaze of the sun."

Eternity was on the pyramid,
And immortality on Greece and Rome;
But in them all the ancient Traitor hid,
And so they tottered like unstable foam.

There was no substance in their soaring hopes:
The voice of Thebes is now a desert cry;
A spider bars the road with filmy ropes
Where once the feet of Carthage thundered by.

A bittern booms where once fair Helen laughed;
A thistle nods where once the Forum poured;
A lizard lifts and listens on a shaft
Where once of old the Colosseum roared.

No house can stand, no kingdom can endure,
Built on the crumbling rock of Self-Desire:
Nothing is Living Stone, nothing is sure,
That is not whitened in the Social Fire.

To the same purport are the lines of Kipling in his "Recessional":

> Far-called, our navies melt away—
> On dune and headland sinks the fire—
> Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
> Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
> Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
> Lest we forget—lest we forget!
> . . . . . .
> For heathen hearts that put their trust
> In iron tube and reeking shard—
> All valiant dust that builds on dust,
> And guarding calls not Thee to guard.
> For frantic boast and foolish word,
> Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!

And what a suggestive picture is that which Markham gives in Semiramis, or "A Look into the Gulf"! In her is embodied the fate of the cruel, the greedy and grinding nations of antiquity; the nations full of hate and lust, and all unspeakable and well-nigh unimaginable crimes and infamies against human brotherhood:

> I looked one night, and there Semiramis,
> With all her mourning doves about her head,
> Sat rocking on an ancient road of Hell,
> Withered and eyeless, chanting to the moon
> Snatches of song they sang to her of old
> Upon the lighted roofs of Nineveh.
> And then her voice rang out with rattling laugh:
> "The bugles! they are crying back again—
> Bugles that broke the nights of Babylon,
> And then went crying on through Nineveh.
> . . . . . .

Stand back, ye trembling messengers of ill!
Women, let go my hair: I am the Queen,
A whirlwind and a blaze of swords to quell
Insurgent cities. Let the iron tread
Of armies shake the earth. Look, lofty towers:
Assyria goes by upon the wind!"
And so she babbles by the ancient road,
While cities turned to dust upon the Earth
Rise through her whirling brain to live again—
Babbles all night, and when her voice is dead
Her weary lips beat on without a sound.

And nature, too, is an illustration of the value of fraternity. God's message to men is written not only in THE Book and in history, but in the life of the field and the face of the sky. "Day unto day uttereth speech," a speech not to be misunderstood or misinterpreted by men of pure purpose, high ideals, and noble aims. And even from the life of the fields our poet gathers material for the emphasizing of his theme:

So from the field comes curious news—
That each one takes what it can use—
Takes what its lifted arms can hold
Of sky-sweet rain and beamy gold;
And all give back with pleasure high
Their riches to the sun and sky.

Yes, since the first star they have stood
A testament of Brotherhood.

—*The Field Fraternity.*

And since revelation, history, and nature all bespeak and illustrate the need, value, and power of brotherhood, so the business of men and nations

is to quicken the coming of the new and greatly needed social era. Especially is this true of the new democracy of our time. The old world and old-world peoples are too firmly fixed in their old-time ideas and ways, but here in this new world where "the elements of empire are plastic yet and warm," here is room for the high and noble ideals of brotherhood to be proclaimed and achieved. This is the note that is heard in "The Errand Imperious":

> But harken, my America, my own,
> Great Mother, with the hill-flower in your hair!
> Diviner is that light you bear alone,
> That dream that keeps your face forever fair.
>
> Imperious is your errand and sublime,
> And that which binds you is Orion's band.
> For some large Purpose, since the youth of Time,
> You were kept hidden in the Lord's right hand.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> 'Tis yours to bear the World-State in your dream,
> To strike down Mammon and his brazen breed,
> To build the Brother-Future, beam on beam;
> Yours, mighty one, to shape the Mighty Deed.

And the cry is for leadership—for some one who will feel the heart-grief and call of humanity, and will be the modern Moses to lead the people out of the present wilderness of social and industrial strife into the peace and quiet of some fraternal Canaan:

So we await the Leader to appear,
Lover of men, thinker and doer and seer,
The hero who will fill the labor throne
And build the Comrade Kingdom, stone by stone.
. . . . . .
Earth listens for the coming of his feet;
The hushed Fates lean expectant from their seat.
He will be calm and reverent and strong,
And, carrying in his words the fire of song,
Will send a hope upon these weary men,
A hope to make the heart grow young again,
A cry to comrades scattered and afar.

Without doubt this leader will be the man described in "The Need of the Hour," fearless and faithful, honest and true, believing in himself, his fellows, and his God, and not afraid to utter truth that to many will seem strange and new, and he will walk as a pioneer in the unfrequented ways of social progress; one who will have

The fine audacities of honest deed;
The homely old integrities of soul;
The swift temerities that take the part
Of outcast right—the wisdom of the heart;
Brave hopes that Mammon never can detain,
Nor sully with his gainless clutch for gain.
. . . . . .
The faith to go a path untrod,
The power to be alone and vote with God.

And it is because Lincoln was such a man, and because Markham has so conceived him, that he has been able to write what is, I think, the best Lincoln poem we possess. Lincoln was one of the people; he understood them as possibly no other

man of his day. Because of this he could interpret them, could speak to, touch, mold, and influence them as few men have been able to do. And when the great crisis came the heart of the people safely trusted the wisdom and purpose of "Honest Abe," who was one with them in that rugged integrity, that simple sincerity and directness, that is at the heart and center of artisan and peasant life. When Markham describes him he is describing not only the leader who saved the nation in the hour of great darkness and desperate need, but he is also outlining the type of man who will lead the nation out of the social chaos and industrial disorder that our author deems so evident and unworthy a characteristic of our age:

When the Norn-Mother saw the Whirlwind Hour,
Greatening and darkening as it hurried on,
She bent the strenuous Heavens and came down
To make a man to meet the mortal need.
She took the tried clay of the common road—
Clay warm yet with the genial heat of Earth—
Dashed through it all a strain of prophecy;
Then mixed a laughter with the serious stuff.
It was a stuff to wear for centuries,
A man that matched the mountains, and compelled
The stars to look our way and honor us.

The color of the ground was in him, the red earth;
The tang and odor of the primal things—
The rectitude and patience of the rocks;
The gladness of the wind that shakes the corn;
The courage of the bird that dares the sea;
The justice of the rain that loves all leaves;

The pity of the snow that hides all scars;
The loving-kindness of the wayside well;
The tolerance and equity of light
That gives as freely to the shrinking weed
As to the great oak flaring to the wind—
To the grave's low hill as to the Matterhorn
That shoulders out the sky.

And so he came.
From prairie cabin up to Capitol,
One fair Ideal led our chieftain on.
For evermore he burned to do his deed
With the fine stroke and gesture of a king.
He built the rail-pile as he built the State,
Pouring his splendid strength through every blow,
The conscience of him testing every stroke,
To make his deed the measure of a man.

So came the Captain with the mighty heart:
And when the step of Earthquake shook the house,
Wrenching the rafters from their ancient hold,
He held the ridgepole up, and spiked again
The rafters of the Home. He held his place—
Held the long purpose like a growing tree—
Held on through blame and faltered not at praise.
And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down
As when a kingly cedar green with boughs
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky.
—*Lincoln, the Man of the People.*

V

BROTHERHOOD IN CHRIST

It is highly significant that Mr. Markham's hope for better social, civic, and industrial conditions is grounded in essential Christianity; not in creeds, or forms, or interpretations, but

in that which is Christianity's elemental and unshakable strength—Christ. It has been well said that all men who look for better conditions in the life of this world do some way turn to Christ as the fulfillment of their hope. Our poet has no faith in socialistic and anarchistic schemes that shut out God and Christ with all their vast and varied implications. In some stanzas dedicated to Louise Michel he says:

> I cannot take your road, Louise Michel,
> Priestess of Pity and of Vengeance—no:
> Down that amorphous gulf I cannot go—
> That gulf of Anarchy whose pit is Hell.

And his "Muse of Labor," whose text is, "And I saw a New Heaven and a New Earth," sings not of a fraternal state that is to be founded on lawlessness and atheism—that were building on sand; but of one grounded in the solid and eternal Rock—Christ:

> I stand by Him, the Hero of the Cross,
> To hurl down traitors that misspend His bread;
> I touch the star of mystery and loss
> To shake the kingdoms of the living dead.
>
> I wear the flower of Christus for a crown;
> I poise the suns and give to each a name;
> And through the hushed Eternity bend down
> To strengthen gods and keep their souls from blame.

Our poet objects that the present order does not give what he calls "brother-bread." The "Muse of

Labor" sings and works for the sure-coming time when along with the daily bread there will be brother-bread, bread of the kingdom, enough and to spare for all.

That he believes that God is, and that he is working in and through all forms of organized life for the uplift of mankind, for the amelioration of imperfect conditions, is clearly evident. Our poet is not a poet of the past, but of the present. There may have been beautiful days and types in the ages gone, but better and more beautiful are still to come. He is not a prophet of despair, but of hope. He sees the hand and purpose of God working through good and evil, guiding, controlling, and restraining to one high end and noble destiny—the building of a brotherhood on earth that shall be conformable to the thought and type that lies in the mind of the Eternal Father. This is indicated in "The Climb of Life":

> There's a feel of all things flowing,
> And no power of Earth can bind them;
> There's a sense of all things growing,
> And through all their forms aglowing
> Of the shaping souls behind them.
> . . . . . .
> See the still hand of the Shaper,
> Moving in the dusk of being:
> Burns at first a misty taper,
> Like the moon in veil of vapor,
> When the rack of night is fleeing
> . . . . . .

So the Lord of Life is flinging
Out a splendor that conceals Him;
And the God is softly singing
And on secret ways is winging,
Till the rush of song reveals Him.

And this that is only shadowed and suggested in the just quoted lines comes forth in clear and definite expression in "The New Century." Man has laid his spell upon the continents and they confess to him their secret source of treasure; his scepter of power is upon the realms of nature, and they pay him homage and tribute. The kingdoms of nature have been conquered, subdued, and tilled, but the greater work remains—the subdual of man, himself, of all appetites and ambitions, all desires and passions to the one end, the establishment and strengthening of the Kingdom of Fraternity. And who is watching over this process, who is guiding and pushing it ever on? God!

God is descending from eternity,
And all things, good and evil, build the road.
Yea, down in the thick of things, the men of greed
Are thumping the inhospitable clay.
By wondrous toils the men without the Dream,
Led onward by a something unawares,
Are laying the foundations of the Dream,
The Kingdom of Fraternity foretold.

And it is this feeling that God is in the ways of men, interested in all their doings, spending himself for their uplift and development, that is

the inspiration of that beautiful and daring conception, "Song to the Divine Mother." "This song," as Markham himself tells us, "should be read in the light of the deep and comforting truth that the Divine Feminine as well as the Divine Masculine Principle is in God—that He is Father-Mother, Two-in-One." So Isaiah had in mind when he said, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." And this Mother-heart is compassionate of the weariness and woes of her children. Even though the children are blamable for their poor estate this Divine Mother-Love does not fail. To this the poet makes his appeal for help:

Come down, O Mother, to the helpless land,
That we may frame our Freedom into Fate:
Come down, and on the throne of nations stand,
That we may build Thy beauty in the State.

Come shining in upon our daily road,
Uphold the hero heart and light the mind;
Quicken the strong to lift the People's load,
And bring back buried justice to mankind.

Shine through the frame of nations for a light,
Move through the hearts of heroes in a song:
It is Thy beauty, wilder than the night,
That hushed the heavens and keeps the high gods strong.

. . . . . .

Come, Bride of God, to fill the vacant Throne,
Touch the dim Earth again with sacred feet;
Come, build the Holy City of white stone,
And let the whole world's gladness be complete.

Come with the face that hushed the heavens of old—
Come with Thy maidens in a mist of light;
Haste, for the night falls and the shadows fold,
And voices cry and wander on the height.

The place of Christ in this redeemed and rejuvenated world is not difficult to find. The old Messianic hope glows in Markham's breast. The prophecies speak to him of the growth of men and nations in holiness and helpfulness. The words of Jesus are the seed some day to spring up and bring the abundant harvest. The golden rule is not to him an "iridescent dream" in politics or trade. The word of the Master will surely find its fruition. It will not return to him void. But he is not looking for any mechanical, materialistic coming. This kingdom comes as the kingdom of growth, as the kingdom of truth, quietly, without noise, or show, or any such thing; none the less it comes, with certainty and steady step. No power can long withstand or hinder. All this is voiced for us in "The Desire of Nations." As we read we share in the universal joy at his coming, we are glad in the gladness of the race:

Earth will go back to her lost youth,
And life grow deep and wonderful as truth,
When the wise King out of the nearing Heaven comes
To break the spell of long millenniums—
To build with song again
The broken hope of men—
To hush and heroize the world,
Beneath the flag of Brotherhood unfurled.

And He will come some day:
Already is His star upon the way!
He comes, O world, He comes!
But not with bugle-cry nor roll of doubling drums.
. . . . . .
And when He comes into the world gone wrong,
He will rebuild her beauty with a song.
To every heart He will its own dream be:
One moon has many phantoms in the sea.
Out of the North the norns will cry to men:
"Balder the Beautiful has come again!"
The flutes of Greece will whisper from the dead:
"Apollo has unveiled his sun-bright head!"
The stones of Thebes and Memphis will find voice:
"Osiris comes: O tribes of Time, rejoice!"
And social architects who build the State,
Serving the Dream at citadel and gate,
Will hail Him coming through the labor-hum,
And glad quick cries will go from man to man:
"Lo, He has come, our Christ the Artisan—
The King who loved the lilies, He has come!"

He will arrive, our Counselor and Chief.
And with bleak faces lighted up will come
The earth-worn mothers from their martyrdom,
To tell Him of their grief.
And glad girls caroling from field and town
Will go to meet Him with the labor-crown,
The new crown woven of the heading wheat.
And men will sit down at His sacred feet;
And He will say—the King—
"Come, let us live the poetry we sing!"
And these, His burning words, will break the ban—
Words that will grow to be,
On continent, on sea,
The rallying cry of man.

Well he knows that the true coming of the King and the kingdom is the incarnation of his Spirit

and truth in human hearts and organizations. It is nothing magical or miraculous, it is the acceptance of Christ's teachings, and the embodiment of them in personal practice and in the organic Christian state; the application of them to the work of every day by men of good will. The Christ-man will one day build the Christ-state, permeated by the Christ-force, and a nation will be born in a day. This, after all, is the secret of his coming. In proportion as these ideals are realized he comes and the kingdom grows. To refuse to recognize this is to bar the way, and to oppose the advance of brotherliness and social peace. When men truly accept Christ they become obedient to the heavenly vision,they see with his eyes,believe with his beliefs, and walk in his ways. Then will be seen the "new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband":

It is a vision waiting and aware;
  And you must draw it down, O men of worth—
Draw down the New Republic held in air,
  And make for it foundations on the Earth.

Some breathing of the visionary host
  Breaks fitfully along the world's advance;
A passing glimmer touched New England's coast,
  A whisper of its passion came on France.

Saint John beheld it as a great white throne,
  Above the ages wondrous and afar;
Mazzini heard it as a bugle blown;
  And Shelley saw it as a steadfast star.

The Lyric Seer beheld it as a feast,
A great white table for the People spread;
And there was knightly joy, with Christ the Priest
And King of Labor sitting at the head.

Ideal peaks are possible to men:
Hold to the highest, resolute and strong,
And the glad Muses will descend again,
To walk the roads of kingdoms white with song.
—*To Heroic Men.*

VI

FINALE

If further illustration of his message, its spirit and purpose, is desired it can be found in abundance in his recent book of verse. True, in this new book he sings of Love, as in "Virgilia," "The Homing Heart," and other lyrics. A love it is ideal, idyllic, and eternal—begun in heaven, and having its highest and holiest consummation there when the cycle is complete. None the less it is a love touched and glorified with the spirit of sacrifice and service, that is at the heart of the world's inbrothering. Tennyson sends his disappointed and broken lover to find death in the wars. Markham sends his to find life in the service of his fellows. And the difference in ideal connotes the growth of the sense of humanity, the progress of the brotherly spirit:

I will go the way and my song shall save me,
Though griefs go with me ever abreast:
I will finish the work that the strange God gave me,
And then pass on to rest.

I will go back to the great world-sorrow,
To the millions bearing the double load—
The fate of to-day and the fear of to-morrow:
I will taste the dust of the road.

I will go back to the pains and the pities
That break the heart of the world with moan;
I will forget in the grief of the cities
The burden of my own.

There in the world-grief my own grief humbles,
My own hour melts in the days to be,
As the wild white foam of a river crumbles,
Forgotten in the sea. —*Virgilia.*

Here, too, will be found such social themes as "The Right to Labor in Joy," "Heroes of the Dream," "The Home," "The Love of Friends;" such Scripture subjects as "The Song of the Magi," "Before Mary of Magdala Came," "The Way to Emmaus," and others of like nature, all handled with reverent freedom, with high cheer, and with genuine sincerity. Indeed, the sincerity of Mr. Markham is evident in all he writes. The fire of conviction glows in his lines. The power of his vision rests on him mightily and inspires him to write, and speak, and work for the realization of his dream. He is no despondent doubter, he forereaches the good time that he so surely sees is on the way. It may not come in perfectness in his day, but it is surely coming, and he finds joy in the consciousness that he is one of the humble instruments of that Eternal Truth

which through the ages has been calling and inspiring men

> To leave the low, dank thickets of the flesh
> Where man meets beast and makes his lair with him;
> For spirit reaches of the strenuous vast,
> Where stalwart souls reap grain to make the bread
> God breaketh at his tables, and is glad.
>
> —*William Vaughn Moody.*

The joy that our poet has in all this, the delight he takes in his share of the work, his gladsome confidence that truth cannot fail and that the feet of the coming kingdom are moving swiftly on the way—all this is voiced in that poem which incarnates the very spirit of high hope and courage and cheer, and so makes a fitting finale to this survey of the timely and seerlike work of Edwin Markham:

> These songs will perish like the shapes of air—
> The singer and the songs die out forever;
> But star-eyed Truth (greater than song or singer)
> Sweeps hurrying on: far off she sees a gleam
> Upon a peak. She cried to men of old
> To build the enduring, glad Fraternal State—
> Cries yet through all the ruins of the world—
> Through Karnack, through the stones of Babylon—
> Cries for a moment through these fading songs.
>
> On wingèd feet, a form of fadeless youth,
> She goes to meet the coming centuries;
> And, hurrying, snatches up some human reed,
> Blows through it once her terror-bearing note,
> And breaks and throws away. It is enough
> If we can be a bugle at her lips,
> To scatter her contagion on mankind.
>
> —*These Songs Will Perish.*

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EDWARD ROWLAND SILL

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.—*Paul.*

THE MAN

EDWARD ROWLAND SILL died just when he was ready and ripe for his work. In the fullness of his powers, when his productivity was fulfilling the promise of earlier years, and at the same time was the prophecy of the finer output of the future, his spirit took its flight. The fate that Keats foresaw and feared for himself happened to this man of unquestioned poetic gifts. He vanished from our sight

> Before his pen had gleaned his teeming brain,
> Before high-pilèd books in charact'ry
> Held like rich garners the full-ripened grain.

How often it is so! Just when one is ready for life and work, when one's preparation is complete, when power for productivity is at its height, then "the silver cord is loosed, the golden bowl is broken, the pitcher is broken at the fountain, the wheel is broken at the cistern." This it is that makes us feel that there are in man greater orations than have ever been spoken, finer pictures than have ever been painted, statues of more wondrous grace and beauty than the hand has ever been able to fashion, and songs more

delicate, exquisite, and perfect than the lips have ever uttered.

> Beyond the poet's sweet dream lives
> The eternal epic of the man. —*Whittier.*

The highest and finest ideals of a man are rarely or never achieved.

> Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
> Or what's a heaven for? —*Browning.*

The brevity of time, the imperfectness of utterance, the lack of opportunity or fit occasion, the hostility of environment—all this keeps back and down the best that is in us. This truth it is that gives significance to Browning's saying:

> All I could never be,
> All men ignored in me,
> This I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

And all this, as has already been suggested, finds illustration in the story of Sill. What he did is only just a suggestion and hint of what he hoped to do, and doubtless would have done if time and opportunity had been given him.

For the following brief biographic note we are indebted to a little sketch of Sill's life that is published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. as a sort of preface to the first volume of his writings published by them, and entitled simply Poems:

"He was born in Windsor, Connecticut, in 1841,

and graduated at Yale College with the class of 1861. He went to California not long after graduation, and at first engaged in business, but in 1867 returned east with the expectation of entering the ministry, and studied for a few months at the Divinity School of Harvard University. He gave up the purpose, however, married, and occupied himself with literary work, translating Rau's Mozart, holding an editorial position on the New York Evening Mail, and bringing out his volume of poems.

"His peculiar power in stimulating the minds of others drew him into the work of teaching, and he became principal of an academy in Ohio. His California life, however, had given him a strong attachment to the Pacific coast and a sense that his health would be better there, and accordingly, on receiving an invitation to a position in the Oakland High School, he removed to California in 1871, remaining there till 1883. In 1874 he accepted the chair of English Literature in the University of California, and identified himself closely with the literary life which found its expression in magazines and social organization.

"Upon his return to the east with the intention of devoting himself more exclusively to literary work, he began that abundant production which has been hinted at, and which, anonymous for the

most part, was rapidly giving him facility of execution and drawing attention to the versatility, the insight, the sympathetic power, the inspiring force which had always marked his teaching and bade fair to bring a large and appreciative audience about him. He lived remote from the press of active life, always close to the center of current intellectual and spiritual movements, in the village of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, where he died after a brief illness, February 27, 1887."

THE NATURE AND QUALITY OF HIS WRITING

I

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

It could hardly be expected that a man born in 1841 and dying in 1887 could do more than give us a taste of his quality and a suggestion of the power that was in him. What we have of Sill makes us regret keenly the brevity of his life and the littleness of the opportunity that was his. And yet we have reason for joy and thankfulness that this man conceived his life's purpose so well, and that in its brief span he gave us work of so high and enduring quality. The quickly fleeting years were filled with worthy effort and ennobling song. As is said in the brief sketch just quoted, "he lived always close to the center of current intellectual and spiritual movements." His home was on the uplands of life. The unclean could not pass that way, nor any ravening, wolfish thought find foothold or food on the high places where he walked with free and fearless feet. It would seem as if to the counsel of Paul, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are

pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things," he could truly make answer, "All this have I done from my youth up." There was not time for this man to round out his thought of life, or garner the rich and ripened harvest of his brain. Neither was there time for him to collect and collate the fruitage of his brief but busy life. He was at work giving expression to his deeper self, and not much concerned about it after such expression.

What Mrs. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (Ward) said of him in The Century for September, 1888, is surely true:

> He was outside of the ceramics of the poetic art. He did not give us bric-a-brac. We do not look for him in the department of household art decoration. He expressed himself, so far as he was expressed at all, by pure inspiration. One must not mistake the slight assumption of his work, its modesty, its reticence, its way—so like the author's own—of keeping in the background till sought, for the features of what we are most apt to mean by minor poetry. By pure quality, he was outside of this dead line.
>
> In saying this we do not forget the incompleteness of his achievement in point of some respects which go to fix a man's place or his phase in the poetry of his times. His self-distrust may be called almost pitiful, in view of his creative quality. One might fancy that Death had his eye on that shrinking, exquisite nature which had but just rooted itself in our garden of poetry, and had suffered it to unfold only so far as to taunt us with a singular sense of our loss and the Destroyer's power. There is more pathos in his life and more irony than most lives and deaths could provide material

for if they tried. And this true poet and true man never "tried." His life was as simple and as honest as that of a tree. He could not attitudinize. He never posed. His literary "effect" was the last thing he ever thought of. He cared more about being a genuine man than a recognized poet. . . .

I am confident that a study of his delicate, fragmentary work will bring the reader at the end to the same conviction. He is a truly spontaneous being; he has no "made voice"; he sings because he cannot help it—as the birds do, as the waves do, like the winds; he is of his time, of his country, and of himself.

Much of his thought first found its way to the public through newspapers and magazines, and much more was handed about among his friends—scattered broadcast with loving and lavish hand, and without much thought of future preservation. It has remained for those who recognize in his singing an accent and a tone of universality, a matter and manner, a note and quality that make for abidingness and power, to gather up his scattered and fugitive verse and give it to the public in some fit and permanent form. This has been done by Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., in three small volumes entitled respectively and in the order of their publication, Poems; The Hermitage, and Other Poems; Hermione, and Other Poems. These are the volumes that form the basis of this study.

In these sonnets and poems we find Mr. Sill singing of life and love, of God and man, of faith and

practice; and always with a note and accent that lifts one into the higher realms of living. Nature and human nature, life and labor are by him interpreted in the light of the Spirit. As fully as the prophets and priests, the singers and seers of other days, he sees the meagerness and meanness, the utter valuelessness, of a life bounded by the cradle and the grave. He has a message and knows it such, but he knows, too, that this message is not unique and singular. His is not the first and only voice to frame and sing, nor will it be the last. He has the wisdom to see and know that his message is only an echo, a note, a tone of the eternal message that God has somehow put into the heart of man and into the very constitution of things, so that the seer and singer is only gathering up some little part of the universal message. The pity of it is that most of us are too dull of soul and too slow of wit to hear and appreciate the voice of God speaking through all the various elements of the world. That our singer is sensitive to the Universal Voice is evident in what he suggests in "The Singer's Confession":

> Once he cried to all the hills and waters
> And the tossing grain and tufted grasses:
> "Take my message—tell it to my brothers!
> Stricken mute I cannot speak my message."
>
> . . . . . .

What was he, that he had touched *their* message—
Theirs, who had been chanting it forever:
With whose organ-tones the human spirit
Had eternally been overflowing!
Then, with shame that stung in cheek and forehead,
Slow he crept away.
And now he listens,
Mute and still, to hear them tell their message—
All the holy hills and sacred waters;
When the sea-wind swings its evening censer,
Till the misty incense hides the altar
And the long-robed shadows, lowly kneeling.

II

THE PLACE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

One clear note struck by this poet concerns the small part played by the individual in the upward movement, and coupled with that the assurance of eternal progress. Most of us are prone to imagine that if our plan is not adopted the heavens will fall. We have some social, political, or religious panacea—accept it and the millennium is at hand; reject it and the Furies and Harpies will eat out the heart of life. As he tells us in "The Hermitage":

This little lying lens, that twists the rays,
So cheats the brain that My house, My affairs,
My hunger, or My happiness, My ache,
And My religion, fill immensity!
Yours merely dot the landscape casually.
'Tis well God does not measure a man's worth
By the image on his neighbor's retina.

And this is true of every man's plan, and effort, and achievement. It is something in the great onward movement of the race, but it bulks not nearly so large in the world life as one is apt to think it does. The attitude of humility is the only attitude for even the seeming great ones of earth. The willingness to be the forerunners and heralds of the greater men to come, to say with the Baptist, "He must increase, I must decrease," is the sign of a royal nature:

> Fret not that the day is gone,
> And thy task is still undone.
> . . . . . .
> Yesterday a babe was born:
> He shall do thy waiting task;
> All thy questions he shall ask,
> And the answers will be given,
> Whispered lightly out of heaven.
> . . . . . .
> 'Tis enough of joy for thee
> His high service to foresee. —*Service.*

There is truth and, in view of his own early dying, there is pathos in his expression of this same thought in another form. The brevity of the individual life, the little that one can do though he lives to the utmost span of life, the fact that every man is simply a little force in the onmarch and uprush of the world's mighty progress, is clearly seen and indicated:

> Why need I seek some burden small to bear
> Before I go?

Will not a host of nobler souls be here,
Heaven's will to do?
Of stronger hands, unfailing, unafraid?
O silly soul! what matters my small aid
Before I go!

. . . . . .

'Tis a child's longing, on the beach at play:
"Before I go,"
He begs the beckoning mother, "let me stay
One shell to throw!"
'Tis coming night; the great sea climbs the shore—
"Ah, let me toss one little pebble more,
Before I go!" —*A Foolish Wish.*

None the less he holds that this little has its place. It has its worth, only it must be rightly conceived. It is part of the race movement. Then, too, he seems to feel that work is not ended by the coming of death. Rather, that is the new beginning and the larger opportunity. Man does not cease to be a coworker with God when the clock of the earthly life ceases to tick and strike. Life's richest fruitage—indeed, the fulfillment of its hopes and yearnings—is found in the days and services that are to be. Here is one who is moping and repining because adversities and difficulties hinder and he cannot forth and toil and achieve as his impelling spirit desires. Then

Suddenly there came a day
When he flung his gloom away.
Something hinted help was near:
Winds were fresh and sky was clear;

Light he stepped, and firmly planned,—
Some good news was close at hand
Truly: for when day was done,
He was lying all alone,
Fretted pulse had ceased to beat,
Very still were hands and feet,
And the robins through the long
Twilight sang his slumber song.—*Fulfillment.*

III

SELF OR SERVICE

In Mr. Sill's philosophy, as in his poetry, the chief thing is life. To him life is opportunity. The sacredness of the common ways and the rich implications of ordinary things is with him a firm faith. In his singing is a strong and earnest call to men to rightly conceive their life and its work. There is no room in his thought for the man who would repine and wail, and seclude himself from the activities and duties, the oppositions and sorrows of life. The sacredness and dignity of the world and its work comes clearly to view in his poems. He feels with Mrs. Browning that

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush aflame with God.

Perhaps the fullest treatment of this truth is found in the poem that gives its name to one of the little volumes that we are considering—"The Hermitage." The slender thread of romance that runs through the poem may be briefly stated. A

man loves and at times feels that his love is reciprocated, but a ring glistening on the finger of his beloved causes him to think that she has given herself to another, and so seals his lips. In disappointment and bitterness of spirit he flings himself out of the towns and cities, away from the haunts of men, away from all the engagements, business, and duties of modern life; leaves the East, journeys to the sunny heights of the California mountains. There in quietness and isolation, neither troubled nor troubling, he will lead and live his life:

> Old World—old, foolish, wicked World—farewell!
> . . . . . .
> I will go seek in far-off lands
> Some quiet corner, where my years shall be
> Still as the shadow of a brooding bird
> That stirs but with her heart-beats. Far, unheard
> May wrangle on the noisy human host,
> While I will face my Life, that silent ghost,
> And force it speak what it would have with me.

He will give himself to the study of nature; grow wise through communion and fellowship; become intellectually rich and morally strong by this intimate, first-hand contact with the elemental things. Thus he thinks he will be ready for the larger life of the future:

> So shall it be, that, when I stand
> On that next planet's ruddy-shimmering strand,
> I shall not seem a pert and forward child
> Seeking to dabble in abstruser lore

> With alphabet unlearned, who in disgrace
> Returns, upon his primer yet to pore—
> But those examiners, all wise and mild,
> Shall gently lead me to my place,
> As one that faithfully did trace
> These simpler earthly records o'er and o'er.

Of course, it does not satisfy. It pales and palls after a while. The longing for activity, the questions of duty to his kind come to perplex and disturb him. Just then, when he is restless, and questioning if, after all, he has not made a grievous blunder, he gets a glimpse in a near-by town of a face and figure that remind him of his beloved. What is she doing there? Is she seeking him? Is it all a dream? A letter brings her to him as he is sick and despairing, and he learns that the ring that sealed his lips was a brother's gift.

The story is, as I have said, only a slender thread on which the poet strings the precious pearls of his thought concerning the worth and wealth of the ordinary life. For be it remembered that this man was no petted and pampered favorite of society; not a man of ease, and wealth, and leisure. No, his was just

> A life,—a common, cleanly, quiet life,
> Full of good citizenship and repute,
> New, but with promise of prosperity,—
> A well-bred, fair, young-gentlemanly life.

At first the youth rejoices in his isolation. He thinks that he is free, that he has found the secret

of growth, and strength, and wisdom. And the poet lets him think and speak out his thought, and thereby he shows us one of the great fallacies of life:

> Man rises best alone:
> Upward his thoughts stream, like the leaping flame,
> Whose base is tempest-blown;
> Upward and skyward, since from thence they came,
> And thither they must flow.
> . . . . . .
> If linked in threes, and fives,
> However heavenward the spirit strives,
> The lowest stature draws the highest down—
> The king must keep the level of the clown.
> The grosser matter has the greater power
> In all attraction; every hour
> We slide and slip to lower scales,
> Till weary aspiration fails,
> And that keen fire which might have pierced the skies
> Is quenched and killed in one another's eyes.

Scattered through the meditations of this lonely man are gems of truth shining out despite the isolation and the imperfect type of life to which he has committed himself; as when he says:

> If men but knew the mazes of the brain
> And all its crowded pictures, they would need
> No Louvre or Vatican: behind our brows
> Intricate galleries are built, whose walls
> Are rich with all the splendors of a life.

And, again, how clearly does he point out the faithful witness in the human heart—courageous conscience, that will not be frightened or stilled,

that follows man as his shadow, that speaks to him of truth and duty, morning, noon, and midnight!—

> All the long nights—those memory-haunted nights,
> When sleepless conscience would not let me sleep,
> But stung, and stung, and pointed to the world
> Which like a coward I had left behind.

And, as conscience pricks and stings, the clouded judgment begins to clear. Things once more appear in true proportion and in right relations. He is able to see the fallacy in his own partial and selfish reasoning. The insufficiency of the isolated and self-full life is clearly seen. The truth that even such power, and thought, and vision as he had were an inheritance from the race flashed through his brain, and made him say:

> I scorned books: to those same books
> I owe the power to scorn them.
> I despised
> Men: from themselves I drew the pure ideal
> By which to measure them.
> At woman's love
> I laughed: but to that love I owe
> The hunger for a more abiding love.
> . . . . . .
> What do I here alone?
> . . . . . .
> Unmarried to the steel, the flint is cold:
> Strike one to the other, and they wake in fire.
>
> A solitary fagot will not burn:
> Bring two, and cheerily the flame ascends.
> Alone, man is a lifeless stone; or lies
> A charring ember, smoldering into ash.

Also he begins to see that he has some part in the world's work—some part that will not be done save as he does it. He has no right to shirk. God truly guides, controls, and works, but does so through men whom he has created and fitted for the labor and duty of life:

> Shame! that a man with hand and brain
> Should, like a lovelorn girl, complain,
> Rhyming his dainty woes anew,
> When there is honest work to do!
>
> What work, what work? Is God not wise
> To rule the world He could devise?
> Yet see thou, though the realm be His,
> He governs it by deputies.
> Enough to know of Chance and Luck,
> The stroke we choose to strike is struck;
> The deed we slight will slighted be,
> In spite of all Necessity.
> The Parcæ's web of good and ill
> They weave with human shuttles still,
> And fate is fate through man's free will.

It is a keen, true, and well-merited rebuke that the selfish hermit receives from the lips of the woman he loved and loves, but whom he left without a word of explanation, though, as she tells him, he must have known her love:

> "I am come, because you called to me to come.
> What were all other voices when I heard
> The voice of my own soul's soul call to me?
> You knew I loved you—oh, you must have known!
> Was it a noble thing to do, you think,

To leave a lonely girl to die down there
In the great empty world, and come up here
To make a martyr's pillar of your pride?
There has been nobler work done, there in the world,
Than you have done this year!"

Then cried the man:
. . . . . .
"O God, I am not worthy of thy gifts!
Let me find penance, till, years hence, perchance,
Made pure by toil, and scourged with pain and prayer"—
Then a voice answered through His creature's lips,—
"God asks no penance but a better life.
He purifies by pain—He only; 'tis
A remedy too dangerous for our
Blind pharmacy."

It is the same truth that is taught by Tennyson in "The Palace of Art." Some seek isolation because of pride. They think themselves superior, they will not mingle with the common herd. They are better than their fellows. They will give themselves to the heights of intellectual and artistic contemplation. Others flee the world and its work because they think it has used them ill. They have been disappointed, opposed, unappreciated. So they will shake its dust from their feet. They will not concern themselves with its problems, its needs, or its work. Either way lies selfishness and sin. All the experiences of life are for man's enrichment and development. His fellows need him, and not less he needs his fellows. "God saw that it was not good for man to be

alone" is a truth wider in its range than is usually considered. And this is the truth that our poet has grasped and worked out in "The Hermitage." Whatever life brings, man's place is with his fellows, weeping and rejoicing, and striving and toiling with them to hasten the coming of the time when

> the whole round world shall every way
> Be bound with chains of gold about the feet of God.

ILLUSTRATION OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

I

IN GENERAL

In seeking for illustrations of the influence of Christian thought upon the thought and work of this poet, we will not find them, as in Gilder, in a large and free dealing with fundamental Christian truths. For instance, there is in Sill no such sustained attention as we find in Gilder to such themes as Christ, Faith, and Immortality. They are touched, hinted at, suggested, but there is nothing like a full and adequate treatment. Neither will we find in our author that devotion to one main theme, and absorption in it—its elucidation and application in many ways and to all realms of life—that is so characteristic a feature of Markham. Rather will it be found that his whole thinking is suffused with the spirit and truth of Christianity. And while he may not definitely or specifically sing of these truths, yet whatever he touches is colored with the truth and faith that beats with his blood and is warp and woof of his life. That this is so is evident from what has already been noted

concerning "The Hermitage." The old monastic conception of life was, to say the least, an imperfect representation of real religion. The Baptist was an ascetic, but Jesus was a man of the villages and towns, a frequenter of weddings and feasts. True Christianity is a social brotherhood and has an outlook on the entirety of life. It teaches that all life's experiences rightly received and rightly used will make for individual uplift and social betterment. Paul must not whine and take himself from the work of life because of some disappointment, or imperfect equipment for life and work. No, his business is so to relate himself to this experience that his use of it shall be a source of inspiration and a tower of strength to his fellows! And this is the spiritual significance of "The Hermitage."

II

THE SENSE OF GOD

It is in some such way as this that we get at the influence of God upon our author. One will not find very many direct treatments of this theme, it is true; but none the less the consciousness of God, the sense of his presence, the worth of the worshipful and spiritual instinct, all this is implicit in much that Mr. Sill has written. Some words let fall by the hermit in his musings evidence this.

What a beautiful metaphor is that in which he speaks of the coming and going of the image of God in human hearts!—

> The voice of my wild brook is marvelous;
> Leaning above it from a jutting rock
> To watch the image of my face, that forms
> And breaks, and forms again (as the image of God
> Is broken and regathered in a soul), . . .
>
> —*The Hermitage.*

Thus he teaches the truth of the inshining and outshining of God, when the soul of man is in harmony and peace with him, and the obscuring of that image by the turmoil and trouble, the murk and dark of sin. We seek for rest and peace, and find it not. We are worried, distressed, and discontented, and find no quiet for our souls. We forget that God is the secret and the source of true contentment. But our poet forgets not. A quiet mind that trusts in God finds the rest that thousands vainly seek:

> One key is solitude, and silence one,
> And one a quiet mind, content to rest
> In God's sufficiency, and take His world,
> Not dabbling all the Master's work to death
> With our small interference. God is God.
>
> —*The Hermitage.*

The same great and needful lesson is inculcated in some lines that are in truth a fine comment on the text, "All things work together for good to them that love God." The poet is singing of the varied

and changeful experiences that come to us as we pass on our checkered way—the loves and griefs, the hopes and fears, the pains, the burdens, and the tangled threads of life that at the time seem harsh, inexplicable, and incapable of unravelment. What is the rich, full meaning and outcome of all this? Hear him:

> But loves and hopes have left us in their place,
> Thank God! a gentle grace,
> A patience, a belief in His good time,
> Worth more than all Earth's joys to which we climb.
> —*Retrospect.*

And how exquisitely is expressed the soul's need for God, the truth that he and he only is the satisfying portion in time and in eternity, in "The Things that Will Not Die"! Here, one who is on the eternal borderland is looking earthward and recounting the things that will abide, and that he is glad will abide everywhere and forever. The vision fills his soul with the sense of beauty and peace, and in deep contentment he sings:

> And it is well that when these feet have pressed
> The outward path from earth, 'twill not seem sad
> To them that stay; but they who love me best
> Will be most glad
> That such a long unquiet now has had,
> At last, a gift of perfect peace and rest.

His consciousness of the Fatherhood and lovingness of God is indicated and voiced in two poems, the one a depiction of an Eastern winter

with its bleak and bitter winds that bite and chill and shrivel body and mind. He longs for the genial clime that he has known, with its warmth and cheer and light, and with that mental and spiritual warmth and enlargement that he images as coming through the influence of the sunnier clime:

> Ah, give me back the clime I know,
> Where all the year geraniums blow,
> And hyacinth-buds bloom white for snow;
> . . . . . .
> Where man may let earth's beauty thaw
> The wintry creed which Calvin saw,
> That God is only Power and Law;
>
> And out of Nature's bible prove,
> That here below as there above
> Our Maker—Father—God—is Love.
>
> —*Eastern Winter.*

The other is a simple prayer; a prayer for the Father's love and guidance and care; a prayer that seems so human and real that it must come forth of a heart that felt its need of the Father's presence and comfort and love:

> Oh, love us, for we love thee, Maker—God!
> And would creep near thy hand,
> And call thee "Father, Father," from the sod
> Where by our graves we stand,
> And pray to touch, fearless of scorn or blame,
> Thy garment's hem, which Truth and Good we name.
>
> —*A Prayer.*

How many of us professing to be children of faith are yet all our lifetime in bondage to doubt!

How often, asserting with our lips that we believe in God, do our actions and worriments express disbelief in the ways and works of God! We are fearful of ourselves, distrustful of our fellows, and not quite sure of God. There is a false view of things current even in the religious world. Listening to much of the speaking and preaching of to-day, one would think that the world-movement was making for evil; that men were more and more under the sway and power of sin; that the cause of truth and righteousness was waning; that God had abdicated, and that the devil was seated on the throne of the universe. It is rank atheism. This phase of thought was understood by Sill, and he has depicted it in "Roland" and shown its fallacy. The man is full of foolish fear, unfaith, and unrest. His whole soul is vexed, disturbed, and turbulent. He is wrong and hence everything is twisted and awry. His salvation comes by virtue of the fact that like Paul he "was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision":

He knew not where the vision fell,
  Only all things grew plain—
As if some thatch broke through and let
  A sunbeam cross his brain.

In beauty flushed the morning light,
  With blessing dropped the rain,
All creatures were to him most fair,
  Nor anything in vain.

He breathed the space that links the stars,
He rested on God's arm—
A man unmoved by accident,
Untouched by any harm.

The weary doubt if all is good,
The doubt if all is ill,
He left to Him who leaves to us
To know that all is well.

The vision is an open one. Any man who wills may see it; and when all men see it, then the "tired earth will taste heaven's honey-dew of rest."

That God is the living God, in touch with men and affairs to-day, interested in the world life, able to reveal himself in counsel, warning, and inspiration to the individual, is an evident faith of our author. One brief poem is sufficient illustration of this. It is so simple, so sure, and so perfect that nothing else is needed to certify the influence of this truth upon him who wrote it. Its voice is the utterance of one who like Elijah has tarried in the mount and heard for himself—who has felt and known. Its conclusion is:

Let the noisy crowd go by:
In thy lonely watch on high,
Far from the chattering tongues of men,
Sitting above their call or ken,
Free from links of manner and form
Thou shalt learn of the wingèd storm—
God shall speak to thee out of the sky.

—*Solitude.*

There is a poem that reveals Mr. Sill's thought about Sunday and the worth of worship that ought not to be omitted. It is specially valuable in this day when the attempt is made, by those who ought to know better, to destroy the essential characteristics of this day. Too long we have allowed the opponents of the day to delude men with the notion that Sunday was a day dull, dreary, and forbidding; that worship was tedious and wearisome. The reverse may be true, ought to be true, and will be true when we hold and embody the true ideal. Sunday ought to be the brightest and cheeriest day of the seven, and will be made such when Christianity rightly conceives and practices its high privilege of gladsome, cheery, inspirational prayer and praise. This is the ideal that our poet depicts, and the sooner it is realized the better for mankind:

SUNDAY

Not a dread cavern, hoar with damp and mold,
Where I must creep, and in the dark and cold
  Offer some awful incense at a shrine
  That hath no more divine
Than that 'tis far from life, and stern, and old;

But a bright hilltop in the breezy air,
Full of the morning freshness high and clear,
  Where I may climb and drink the pure, new day,
  And see where winds away
The path that God would send me, shining fair.

III

THE DIGNITY AND WORTH OF LIFE

As has elsewhere been noted, a chief emphasis of Mr. Sill is upon life—the average, everyday, common life and duty of man. Many of his poems treat of this directly, and others by way of suggestion and implication. There is a group of poems, small in number but of great value, that treats of the dignity, the sacredness, and the high quality of every day, and of the "day's work." They seem to me to have caught at least something of their inspiration from the Master's parables of "the pounds" and "the talents." We think our poor brief day will soon be sped, and that it is not worth while to make much effort. The time is so short, the chance so limited, the margin of opportunity so meager! We are thinking of the brevity of time and the swift coming of death. Our poet thinks of life and the richness of the present hour. The opportunity of to-day is the truth that cheers and inspires him as he faces all the facts, and so with gay cheer and confidence he cries:

> Let it come, when come it must;
> But To-Day from out the dust
> Blooms and brightens like a flower,
> Fair with love, and faith, and power.
>
> —*Carpe Diem.*

And the same truth, only wider and deeper in its reach, is unfolded in what is perhaps one of the best known of Mr. Sill's poems, "Life." We want life to be a success. We fancy, all too often, that there will come to us some dramatic possibility, some spectacular moment, some great thing to be done at a stroke! Sometimes that is true, but rarely. The law is otherwise. It is the old fable of the hare and the tortoise. The men who rightly esteem the days as they come and go, who see the possibility that sleeps in the common and disregarded, who make the most and best of these things that others waste, are the men who come to achievement and fruition. As to-day, in manufactures, fortunes are found in what not long since was cast out as waste and void, so the fortune of life may be found in the moments and days that we so lightly esteem and so carelessly waste:

> Forenoon and afternoon and night,—Forenoon,
> And afternoon, and night,—Forenoon, and—what!
> The empty song repeats itself. No more?
> Yea, that is Life: make this forenoon sublime,
> This afternoon a psalm, this night a prayer,
> And Time is conquered, and thy crown is won.

And how true it is that when in the battle of life the conflict grows hard and dangers thicken, then we grow frightened and cowardly! We seek some excuse, some reason for going to the rear, for dropping out of sight: we are not just well

equipped for this battle, we have not the place in the line that we think we ought to have, we have not been appreciated nor our efforts thus far rightly regarded or rewarded. The battle of life roars and rages all about; it's a good time to slip away under cover of the cloud of smoke, and ease our conscience by some such excuse as has been noted. The truth is we are wanting in soldierly courage and character. The true warrior is he who responds to his commander's order, "Go in anywhere, there's beautiful fighting all along the line." A man's opportunity is not in his position, his weaponry, or his friendships, but in himself. The intrepidity, the cheer, the resourcefulness, the stout-heartedness of the true soldier will repair all damage, will overleap all obstacles, will forge fit weaponry, will find or make its own opportunity, and against all odds will snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat. The sons of the King in the battle and work of life are no dawdling, complaining, pessimistic shirkers and deserters! They partake the spirit, and cheer, and confidence of the Father, and the spirit in them makes mighty in their hearts the weaponry that less high-souled men cast aside as worthless and useless. All this Mr. Sill depicts most vividly in a little poem instinct with the spirit of struggle and suffused with the atmosphere of battle. The craven com-

plains of his sword, breaks and flings away, and like a coward skulks from the fight:

> Then came the king's son, wounded, sore bestead,
> And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,
> Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,
> And ran and snatched it, and with battle shout
> Lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down,
> And saved a great cause that heroic day.
>
> —*Opportunity.*

Another group of songs there is that is rich in the high moral courage that is so characteristic a quality of the New Testament. All through these verses one catches the tones of a manly voice calling upon his fellows in the very spirit of high Christian devotion and chivalry to give themselves to the work of life with earnestness, loyalty, and endurance to the last. It is this truth that enables him to see that suicide is cowardice, the last unavailing refuge of a moral weakling; even the outcasts on the farther shore will point the finger of scorn at this shirker of life's problems as they say, "See the wretch that dared not live!" No wonder that the prayer for death is the most blind and foolish of prayers. No wonder that he who rushes on death before his time is reckoned among the cravens and cowards of the race:

> Blindest and most frantic prayer,
> Clutching at a senseless boon,
> His that begs, in mad despair,
> Death to come;—he comes so soon!
>
> —*The Deserter.*

And as one should not hasten the hour of his departure, even so he need have no fear of the coming of that hour. It is not his to hasten or to hinder. His it is to meet the varied experiences of time with the high courage of the inner life. He is not to whimper or whine, to fear or tremble, to grow bitter or morose. Rather with face of cheer and heart of hope is he to play a man's part and do a man's work in a manly way in this world, which of divine intent is made up of sunshine and shadow, of prosperity and adversity, of war and peace:

> Let me lift up my head
> And firmly, as with inner courage, tread
> Mine own appointed way, on mandates high.
> . . . . . .
> Let me have lived my life, not cowered until
> The unhindered and unhastened hour was here.
> So soon—what is there in the world to fear?
> —"*Quem Metui Moritura?*"

With keen insight into the ways of men he reveals in "Dare You?" the hemispheres that must be united in order that moral courage may be complete and full-orbed. Shrewdly he sees into the sophistry of man whereby he is wont to think that his courage is the only courage, and that the other man's way is the way of cowardice. Under guise of a conversation between doubting Thomas and loving John this truth shines clear. Thomas the doubter thinks that his attitude

betokens the highest quality of courage, and doubtless thinks himself the very embodiment of moral heroism, and so he asks:

"Tell me now, John, dare you be
One of the minority?
To be lonely in your thought,
Never visited nor sought,
Shunned with secret shrug, to go
Through the world esteemed its foe?'

But John has a question ready. He realizes that there is courage not only in the one who says, "I doubt," but that it ofttimes requires an even greater courage to say, "I believe." If it requires courage to be singular and alone, so also, and possibly more so, to be one of the common crowd and to be esteemed as possessing no originality or initiative, just because one sees that the common conviction and view is, after all, the wise and the true. And so he turns with his counter question:

"Thomas, do you dare to be
Of the great majority?
To be only, as the rest,
With Heaven's common comforts blessed;
To accept, in humble part,
Truth that shines on every heart?"

But moral courage must at times incarnate itself in some mighty reformer—some man who sees the world's woe and need, and has clear vision of at

least some phase of the remedy; some Luther who will stand against ecclesiastical and civil power; some Garrison who "will not retract or equivocate, and who will be heard"; some Neal Dow about whom the temperance hosts can rally. When such a man comes he will not be shaken in his purpose. The very spirit of the gospel, in its opposition to intrenched and buttressed wrong, in its hatred of the sin and hoary customs that oppress and destroy, in its hunger for and devotion to the Righteousness that uplifts and develops, is seen in our poet's conception of "The Reformer":

> Before the monstrous wrong he sets him down—
> One man against a stone-walled city of sin.
> . . . . . .
> Let him lie down and die: what is the right,
> And where is justice, in a world like this?
> But by and by, earth shakes herself, impatient;
> And down, in one great roar of ruin, crash
> Watchtower and citadel and battlements.
> When the red dust has cleared, the lonely soldier
> Stands with strange thoughts beneath the friendly stars.

And in his characterization and unfoldment of the truth of life the poet has not forgotten to put due emphasis upon the need of service and unselfish thoughtfulness for others. This phase of his thought has been already touched upon in what has been said concerning his poems entitled "Service" and "The Singer's Confession." It

only remains to say that in "Sibylline Bartering" there shines out the truth that if one would have secure friendships, and with these all the happiness and joy of life, he must pay the price and slay self-love. And the longer he delays the greater the price, for at the end self-love must die or friends and joy will be lacking. One who bickers and barters and refuses only increases the cost, for what at last he gets is only what he might have had from youth up if he had been willing to pay what in the end he had to pay:

> Ready now to pay
> The perfect love that leaves no self to slay!

And in "The Secret" we see that the way to have the glory and the joy of life, to feel the wonder and beauty, the wealth and worth of the world, of men, of God—the way into the very center and heart of life—is to be forgetful of self and be immersed in unselfish thought and worthy work. The man who selfishly seeks the joy and power of earth misses it, while he who busies himself with humble duties, and fills each day with simple neighborly kindnesses, rejoices in its light and warmth:

> The blessing came because it was not sought;
> There was no care if thou wert blest or not:
> The beauty and the wonder all thy thought,—
> Thyself forgot.

IV

THINGS OF THE SPIRIT

Though not treated with anything like adequateness, yet it is clear that some of the great beliefs of Christendom strongly influenced his thinking. Had he lived longer there is every reason to believe that these themes would have received fuller recognition, and their influence on his verse would have been more distinctly manifest. What Romanes so happily calls "the ripening experience of life" would almost of necessity have directed his pen in these channels. It is clear from what he has written that to Mr. Sill religion was a matter of spirit and life, not of letter or symbol. He tells us that once in the early hours of the day he happened in a dim and ghostly sort of chapel where old monks read and the people listened dreamily and drowsily. Some one shifted a shutter and the morning light gleamed upon the reader and the Word, and still he droned by the taper's light and the people stirred not from their listless dozing:

> And I wondered that, under that morning ray,
> When night and shadow were scattered away,
> The monk should bow his locks of white
> By a taper's feebly flickering light—
> Should pore, and pore, and never seem
> To notice the golden morning-beam. —*Morning.*

All of which is a parable emphasizing the worthlessness of form, the negativeness of dull acquiescence in customs and ways and beliefs of the past. Religion is of the day. Like the sun in the heavens, it is to illumine and warm, to cheer and stir—an active and vital principle in the world's life.

That he feels the necessity of faith, and knows the value of trust in God in such a world as this, is evident in the little suggestions, the turns of expression, that may be found scattered through many of his writings. In some there is the clear expression of this necessity. Life to him would be utterly inexplicable on any atheistic basis. God—present, wise, loving, and Fatherly—is a necessity of rational thought. In "Five Lives" he launches a shrewd bit of sarcasm against the ponderous and inflated self-conceit of the various schools of thought that would reduce the world to dull, dead matter, devoid of a divine presence, a divine intent, and a divine control. It is true our poet's faith is not always vivid, and strong, and resolute. Sometimes, indeed, it halts and wavers and falters when it ought to walk with firm footing; as when he says:

For life is a blindfold game, and the Voice from view is hid.
I face him as best I can, still groping, here and there,
For the hand that has touched me lightly, the lips that have said, "Declare!" —*Blindfold.*

Still, though feeble and flickering, it is faith—faith that may grow, and indeed does grow, into something more robust and vigorous. He hears the low branches of the forest trees complain of the darkness and the gloom, of the grim and frightful shadows that they seem to see. But he hears as well the tall tree tops lifting themselves skyward and heralding the swift, sure coming of the dawn. It is an image of life—a suggestion of what the voice of experience speaks in the recesses of the soul:

> So Life stands, with a twilight world around;
> Faith turned serenely to the steadfast sky,
> Still answering the heart that sweeps the ground,
> Sobbing in fear, and tossing restlessly—
> "Hush, hush! The Dawn breaks o'er the Eastern sea,
> 'Tis but thine own dim shadow troubling thee."
> —*Faith.*

And how beautifully and melodiously does he sing of the worth of simple and complete trust and confidence! We weary and worry our lives away in foolish fear and restless discontent, when One has said, "Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you":

> Be still and sleep, my soul!
> Now gentle-footed Night
> In softly shadowed stole
> Holds all the day from sight.
> . . . . . .
> Thou hast no need to wake,
> Thou art no sentinel;
> Love all the care will take,
> And Wisdom watcheth well.—*Wiegenlied.*

That he knows the Christian truth of the worth of privation and pain, adversity and sorrow, temptation and trial, in the development of spiritual character is very evident. A life of smoothness, free from all toil and struggle, would leave us physically ungirt, morally weak, and would make for a flabby spirituality. The man who faces and fights his temptations and difficulties, who surmounts obstacles, who makes of hindrances and oppositions a solid pathway for his feet, is the man who will ultimately rise

> on stepping-stones
> Of his dead self to higher things.

This is clearly shown in "Tempted" and in "Fertility." Our poet has not forgotten that the crown of life is awarded to the tried and tempted one who is also the conquering one. The influence of the biblical conception of life as a moral warfare, with the reward for the valiant and faithful soldier of truth and righteousness is clearly evident in his writings:

> Patience, O weary heart!
> Let all thy sparkling hours depart,
> And all thy hopes be withered with the frost,
> And every effort tempest-tost—
> So, when all life's green leaves
> Are fallen, and moldered underneath the sod,
> Thou shalt go not too lightly to thy God,
> But heavy with full sheaves. —*Fertility.*

Nowhere is the influence of Christian truth and teaching more evident than in our author's outlook upon the future. Faith in immortality is fresh and full and vigorous. Death is luminous in the light of the immortal hope. Life is explicable only on the certainty of the richer life to come. We may not hear any voice, we must make the journey alone, yet the only permissible mood is the mood of hope and faith and courage:

Into the silent, starless Night before us,
Naked we glide:
No hand has mapped the constellations o'er us,
No comrade at our side,
No chart, no guide.

Yet fearless toward that midnight, black and hollow,
Our footsteps fare:
The beckoning of a Father's hand we follow—
His love alone is there,
No curse, no care. —*The Future.*

Even Nature is a revelation of the truth of the future. The God who cares for the natural world, who speeds the planets on their way, who garbs the earth with beauty, who guides the "certain flight" of the wood and water fowl, will surely be mindful of his children. All this he believes—the earth whispers and the heavens sing this truth:

My Comforters!—Yea, why not mine?
The power that kindled you doth shine,
In man, a mastery divine;

That Love which throbs in every star,
And quickens all the worlds afar,
Beats warmer where his children are.

The shadow of the wings of Death
Broods over us; we feel his breath:
"Resurgam" still the spirit saith. —*Starlight.*

That personal identity is not lost; that immortality is not vague and shadowy, but clear and definite, is the firm faith of Mr. Sill. In that future life he expects to know and to be known. The things that we see are only half the truth, and hardly that. Even on the earth and in time the mightiest forces are the unseen, and the deepest truths are those that we must accept even while we do not comprehend their full import. To deny the eternal, personal life because we do not see or touch it is to do violence to the very principles by which we live and act on the earth:

Because he never comes and stands
And stretches out to me both hands,
Because he never leans before
The gate, when I set wide the door
At morning, nor is ever found
Just at my side when I turn round,
Half thinking I shall meet his eyes,
From watching the broad moon-globe rise,—
For all this, shall I homage pay
To Death, grow cold of heart, and say:
"He perished, and has ceased to be;
Another comes, but never he"?
Nay, by our wondrous being, nay!

Although his face I never see,
Through all the infinite To Be,
I know he lives and cares for me.
—*The Invisible.*

And with what calm and confident assurance does he accept the gospel truth that heaven is home—a place of comfort for the sorrowing, rest for the weary, peace for the distracted, shelter for the storm-tossed and wandering. All that human thought and love can put, even by deepest and fullest implication, into that word "home"—all this and more than this he realizes as the essential characteristic of heaven:

O heart, that prayest so for God to send
Some loving messenger to go before
And lead the way to where thy longings end,

Be sure, be very sure, that soon will come
His kindest angel, and through that still door
Into the Infinite love will lead thee home.
—*Home.*

But best of all, truest and strongest of all, are the verses so happily named "A Morning Thought." The conception is beautifully accordant with the Christian thought of death as the morning of a new day, and surely no one could ask for finer or more melodious phrasing. The very essence of Christian faith and hope is here:

What if some morning, when the stars were paling,
And the dawn whitened, and the East was clear,
Strange peace and rest fell on me from the presence
Of a benignant Spirit standing near:

And I should tell him, as he stood beside me,
"This is our Earth—most friendly Earth, and fair;
Daily its sea and shore through sun and shadow
Faithful it turns, robed in its azure air:

"There is blest living here, loving and serving,
And quest of truth, and serene friendships dear;
But stay not, Spirit! Earth has one destroyer—
His name is Death: flee, lest he find thee here!"

And what if then, while the still morning brightened,
And freshened in the elm the Summer's breath,
Should gravely smile on me the gentle angel
And take my hand and say, "My name is Death."

It reminds you of what Zschokke says of Death: "I have made myself so familiar with this last, best friend of man that it not only fails to frighten, but it comforts and gladdens me."

As we close these little volumes the beautiful and striking poem of Thomas Bailey Aldrich written in commemoration of Sill comes to our mind and expresses our feeling, our sadness and joy—sadness at his departure, joy at what he has left us of himself. Mr. Aldrich tells us that he was reading a letter just received from Mr. Sill, when the lightning flashed the tidings of his death. Then he adds:

I wondered what it was that died!
The man himself was here,
His modesty, his scholar's pride,
His soul serene and clear.

These neither death nor time shall dim,
Still this sad thing must be—
Henceforth I may not speak to him,
Though he can speak to me!

Even thus, in these poems touching God, and man, and destiny; dealing with principle and practice, thought and life, here and hereafter; filled with faith, and hope, and love; instinct with courage and cheer, he being dead yet speaketh to men of to-day.

AFTERWORD

THE SUPREMACY OF THE SPIRITUAL

THE age is often spoken of as nonspiritual and materialistic. The casual observer notes surface currents and straightway declares that the dollar mark is the national ideal. But this is only a superficial view; the deeper life is everywhere present, and in this day is making itself increasingly felt. One of the most important as well as one of the most helpful tendencies of modern life is the growing sense of the supremacy of the spiritual.

Commerce and civics are responding to the finer ideals of this higher life. The revelations and revolutions in these spheres of activity are evidences of the vitality of the life of the Spirit. It is not merely by chance that Gladstone, McKinley, Hay, and Roosevelt, the foremost figures in recent Anglo-Saxon political life, are also eminent as illustrations of the molding and moving power of spiritual ideals. There is an intimate and vital connection between statesmanship and spiritual vision. The application by the late Mr. John Hay of the golden rule to the world's diplomacy is the most significant and striking fact in modern statecraft.

So also is it in the scientific world. The bald, atheistic, nonspiritual theory of evolution so prevalent a few years since is no longer in the ascendant. Scientific men themselves have been among the first to point out its incompleteness. The "survival of the fittest" may serve as the law of the jungle, but it can never explain humanity. Something more than crude selfishness is required in anything like a complete analysis of mankind, and the spiritual will surely be an element in this complete and final accounting.

And certainly it is worthy of note that we have an increasing group of writers—in prose and poetry—who, in this active and miscalled materialistic time, are emphasizing the value of the spiritual. Illustrations may be found in Van Dyke, Mabie, Wagner, and Brierley among the essayists. To read them is to find proof of the renaissance of the spiritual. One feels that Mabie touches fundamental truth when he writes, "No dead mechanism moves the stars, or lifts the tides, or calls the flowers from their sleep. Truly this is the garment of the Deity, and here is the awful splendor of the perpetual Presence." And this is the truth taught by the singers we have been considering. They are not deceived by appearances; they do not mistake the surface for the substance; they do not substitute matter for spirit. With Napoleon

they hold, "You can only govern men by imagination: without imagination they are brutes. . . . 'Tis by speaking to the soul you electrify men." And it is to the soul that these singers have spoken, even as it is of the soul—its possibilities and achievements—that they have sung. Herein lies their value to this age and to every age; for the supreme question still is, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And the chief business, for the individual and for the universe, in time and through eternity, is just this—the development of the soul.

> What is left for us, save, in growth
> Of soul, to rise up, far past both,
> From the gift looking to the giver,
> And from the cistern to the river,
> And from the finite to infinity,
> And from man's dust to God's divinity?

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